I watched from a far distance as the car approached and guns stuck out the window. I turned around and saw more gang members coming out of an abandoned house to the left of me. They noticed who I was and told me to go in the house and get down, but I didn't listen. At that very moment, I got behind a building and just listened to what sounded like a battle in Iraq. In less than two minutes it was over and I looked around the corner to see the aftermath of it all.

read the rest of Quad B's piece and the third installment of The Revolutionaries on page 5

editor's note takes on various conversations and reviews the best piece of the week. piece of the week finalists vie to win the coveted best without editors note contest

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.13

No time to be wordy, we'll pass this week's honor of writing a chunk of the editorial note to our pal and colleague, Perry Jones step to the plate for that honor, as he takes us on a wild ride he experienced the other day. Brace yourself for a wonderful thoughtful piece he has titled "No Fear No Sorry." Perry!

Knowing that tomorrow isn't for certain and that there are only 24 hours in a day, I find myself pondering this wonder... is there any events you've experienced within the last few weeks that others are probably yearning for? Now, let me see how I feel about some of the events of value that took place within the last few weeks, which makes the whole of me content, and at peace with where I'm at today.

Okay, let me see... yes, so far my day has been pretty productive without any distractions or any obstacles that come about with the course of taking life head on. At this point in time I feel at ease as I sit here at The Beat Within among other people who seem to be at ease and intact with a moment in time that seems to be meant for us all to share and fall in place with.

Over the last few weeks, I been extremely busy with applying pressure to this new year and the resolutions that I'm basing it on. I may have set goals for myself that turn out to be a bit overwhelming. Not to say I'm going to give up on them all-together, I'm just going to have to prioritize my goals, plus be sure to use my time wisely. Taking closer observation of this comfort zone here at the office, I'm rejoicing in my own little way, due to being in a position to experience such a moment in time that many have or will die for; "A Piece Of Peace." As far as I'm concerned, the greatest thing about this creditable, larger the life visual, is that it's made up of "common people" from all shades and walks of life who are making an effort to step up as leaders of some sort.

With all of this in mind, I'm looking around this place admiring the courtesy and support that everyone is extending to one another even if it's just sharing a thought about something or lending a helping hand. As I sit here thinking, my thoughts are set on an exchange that took place while I was at school just yesterday involving an elder African American woman and an Asian American young man probably in his mid-twenties. A moment ago, I was just drifting off letting my thoughts run free, until I saw this older lady drop her books in the middle of the lounge. Some people stopped and stared, some responded off reflex, but still didn't move to pick the books up for this elderly lady. Then there were those who just moved on and passed the issue by as if it never happened. Nevertheless, within a short matter of time this guy came to her aide to help her out. Now that I look back on some things I'm able to take this act of courtesy as a way to reflect on some events that will give more profound definition to the wholeness of my "being" up to this point.

The first event that comes to mind is the whole experience with my god sister giving birth to a beautiful little girl, Gabriella, who she named in relation to my middle name, Gabriel. Now that I think about it I'm realizing that I'm no longer a boy in a man's world. This event alone, meant a lot to me because I'm officially taking it as my rites of passage to becoming a responsible young man in a position of leadership with many roles to play in my family and community, as well as personally. Not long ago the wholeness of me consisted of being a loving son, a nephew, a big brother, and a loyal friend, along with other roles that I pride myself for living up to. However, as of the last few weeks there will be additional roles in my life that will come along with the future and I've been patiently waiting for them to come in due time.

I don't know why, but looking at the appreciation shining off this elderly lady, it made me think back to last week when I had to stay the night at my mom's house to take care of her because she was having problems breathing. I remember sitting downstairs in the living room while she was resting upstairs just thinking about all the good and bad times I had right there in that very living room. Then all of a sudden I was touched by a thought, which resulted to a dead silence in the house that put chill bumps down my back. With that came a forbidden vision that made a tear drop. I realized that my mother might be leaving me. Once I snapped back into reality I walked up to her room to see how she was doing. I found her asleep. I stood there looking over her for a while in silence. All of a sudden, to my surprise, a big smile came about on my face and I felt a strong sense of strength to continue to be My Mother's Sun in what seemed like a dark situation, which is the whole purpose of being a Son, as well as a mother's "will" to LIVE-OR-DIE for a real Son of virtue.

Now my mom is doing better again and this is such a relief for my nerves. I find it crazy how blessings tend to come in disguise when you least expect them. I guess my mom was right once again with the saying that god works in mysterious ways through the hearts of people. Now, I will make this saying evident by using an impacting event that took place just last week, which proved to me that love through divine expression is the solution for re-connection with those who may have lost touch with life and why it is worth living.

The other day I was down on Market Street in San Francisco in a check-cashing place standing in line just looking out of the window loving how nice it was outside on the street. I must say that I was just juiced about how that day was turning out. Then I tuned back into my surroundings to notice that everybody in the room was staring to the back of me as if I sat on dog shit or something. After a while I looked behind me to notice this homeless looking lady with missing teeth on the ground with a needle shoved in her vein with a little bit of blood leaking out staring me dead in the eyes. I didn't know what to do at first, so I tried to ignore her.

Then, out of nowhere, I told myself to relax and become one with myself in order to deal with the situation in a real heart to heart way. Next thing I know the lady is telling me that she was going to shoot nothing but air into her vein, which could end her life within a matter of seconds just because she didn't feel accepted by others. I looked outside and thought to myself, "No way! Life is too good to die on that note." Then she asked me to be honest with her, and I said okay. She asked me what was it about her that first comes to mind as she spoke, and I told her it was her teeth. Then she asked, "What else?" I thought even more in depth by taking a look in her eyes, which I believe are the windows to the soul. Then I said, "I notice that you are an outgoing person and you're calling out for some type of attention and help with problems that are disturbing you, but other than that I see you as a real life person.

Once I said this, she closed her eyes for a minute while digesting a piece of truth that must of sat right in her stomach giving her a gut feeling pleasant enough to make her eyes open with a new found desire to seek and find the brighter sides of life. I found it amazing how this lady eyes looked then compared to how they looked when she was sitting on this filthy floor probably at her lowest point just a touch away from death, but looking down upon other common people who stood on the same grounds as her, which was full of dirt and stains probably left by them. As she forced herself to stand up to her feet it felt as if she and I were connected and feeding off each other's vibrant energy that must have been generated through the shining sun that sparked her back to life.

Once she stood firmly on her own two feet she turned to look outside of the window. I watched as she took a sneak peek with this new outlook and second given chance at living her life on life's terms. I tripped out because it reminded me of a newborn baby being brought into a world that is made up of so many wonders and matters of life that can make a person such as myself curious by nature. The look on this lady face made me think back to the day my soul was also set free after being confined within a hidden reality better known as the Juvenile "Just-Us" System that is and always has been "Made Up " to co-exist as a way for me, and other shades of me (meaning noble people of all ethnical groups with a "Heart" that Operates by a code of conduct similar to mine if not better...) be a killed, or either kill ourselves off softly by the hands of highly influenced or provoked acts of self-destruction while the public eye just watches and does nothing other than whisper questions and remarks amongst themselves while maintaining artificial smiles or looks of concern that were given away by the obvious dollar signs in their revealing eyes.

To go even further with this intoned observation of mine, all these people in this check cashing place reminded me of all the little greedy, selfish, prejudice, disconnected, hypocritical, assumptive ass hole backwards type of people who are employed by so-called authorities who make a living by warehousing a hidden nation of lost and found "youth" of this life time, who can link us all to a bigger and better future beyond our imagination depending on how these parts of life are being stored and maintained . Nevertheless, I was able to see that these so-called "others" really weren't worried about the matter at hand, yet more concern if their number was called to pocket a root to all evil which is known to divide and conquer the heart of men/women all alike.

After a while this lady removed the needle from her veins, then stood up and looked me dead in the eyes and asked, "Well, why is it that people don't like me and are afraid to accept me for who I am?" I simply replied, "Other's fear what they don't or can't understand." At this point she broke out into tears and gave me a hug while repeating, "Wow! Your soul shined through, thank you son, your soul shined through." Taking all of this into consideration, it has humbled me, making me even more content about being a down to earth person with a heart of gold that holds the best interest of myself and my people at heart.

Moving right along, here's this week's topics... Our first topic, "Farewell Speech To The Streets" -Whether you plan on going back to the streets or staying away from the streets when you get out, one thing's for sure — you all were snatched from the streets you knew all too well. So we're giving you an opportunity to write a farewell speech to your 'hood/turf/block.

What would you say in that speech? Would you let them know you'll be back soon, or will you tell them you're leaving never to return again? Would you talk about how the streets have hurt you and helped you? Would you share a story or two? Well, we guess we'll find out because now's the time to write your farewell to the streets speech and get it published in The Beat...

Our second topic, "Growing Old Behind Bars"-We recently received a letter from an old friend doing four life sentences. Now 64, he never imagined how it would end. He wrote: "When I came to prison forty-six years ago, eighteen years young, I had to suffer through being whistled at wherever I went... If they teased me now, my face would not blush over smooth and unwrinkled skin... The once too large chest and arm muscles, from hours each day of lifting weights, now sag, and hundreds of tattoos cover skin that had been unblemished. My eyes, once bright with life, are now dull... I entered prison a 'choice little morsel,' fought, bled and killed to assure my heart kept beating, and now, near the end of the road, I am pointed out as 'the old man,' my legacy."

Confined to a wheelchair, he is forced to consider what it means to die an old man in prison, a reality he never considered when he was a teenager. Can you picture yourself in his position? Think about it, and tell us how you would cope with such a reality — or how you intend to avoid that legacy for yourself.

Lastly, "The Last Time You Felt Really Good" -Tell us about the last time you felt so good inside that everything seemed right with the world. Don't clown by giving us an x-rated piece. Instead, we're interested in that time you felt really good emotionally —like when someone you respect told everyone what a good job you did on something, or when you got an A on a test in a subject you always struggled with, or when you filled your mother or grandmother with pride for something you accomplished.

Piece Of the Week honors goes out to Monique, Lil' Man, NuNu, Kaho, and Big Vic from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Goofy, Paradise, and Young Qb. From Arizona we have Gunner and Avery. Lastly from Walden House we have Grouper Baby and Unknown. Thank you writers for stepping up this week!

This issue goes out to the former gangsters/thugs that have left their old ways and are now on the road to recovery and change. See you next week!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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EDITOR'S NOTE 2

THE REVOLUTIONARIES 4

PIECES OF THE WEEK 6

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK 9

STANDOUTS 11

SAN MATEO COUNTY 19

VOICES IN SPANISH 21

WEEKLY WRITINGS 22

THE BEAT WITHOUT 32

THE REVOLUTIONARIES

From The Beat: Here's the third (and final?) installment from the powerful and thoughtful Revolutionaries. These young men step up huge and share their violent dreams and true stories with us readers. We do not have much to say, except we hope you readers have enjoy this special to The Beat Within. We do hope the wonderful Megan Mercurio will step up and share more with us hungry readers. You ask who Megan is? Well Megan is a believer in her students. She is a teacher who cares, and we are honored to share the work of her students, where every you all are from. Until next time.

The Revolutionaries Introduction

We are the students temporarily residing in U6; however we purposefully choose not to incorporate the unit's name, or any other aspect of this institution into the title of this page. For, we refuse to allow our incarceration to bind our minds or silence our voices. In our daily meetings, we use creative writing and performing arts to explore our minds and to critique the world around us. Please listen to our stories without judgment, and allow our voices to overpower the walls that will never truly contain us. The following pieces stories which describe a vivid memory involving violence.

Special Thanks: Dana Warden

Aww Shhh

I remember when I got stabbed in my arm. It started like any other day. I was outside, enjoying the day, sitting on some steps, enjoying the breeze.

A little while after, the Gang Task Force came and stopped and searched everyone. I've been through it so many times. I already know the procedure. After they were done (nobody had anything as usual) they let us all go, but told us to leave and not come back or else they would arrest us.

I laughed and said, "Yeah, whatever dude."

I walked away with one of my homies. We decided to go get something to eat. As we were about to enter the store, a car full of unknown guys approached. They all exited the vehicle quickly, ran towards us and attempted to question us. They asked us where we were from.

I responded by asking where were they from!

They responded with a known gang, at which point I laughed. I guess they didn't appreciate it because one of them threw a punch, which I was able to evade. But I became angry and started throwing punches back. A fight began and we were whooping them, when out of nowhere a guy approached with a knife in his hand. I looked him dead in the eye and I could tell he was scared and didn't know what to do. So I ran at him and began punching him in the face. He kept stepping back and I kept thinking about the knife that he had in his hand. Out of nowhere, my friend punched him in the side of his face and he crumbled to the floor.

I backed up a few steps and I had an eerie feeling something was wrong. All of a sudden, I saw a hand approaching my face and I leaned back and put my arm up in defense. I felt a little poke but figured he just didn't hit me very hard. When I turned to face him, I saw him backing away slowly. That was when I realized everyone was backing away slowly as well.

As I looked towards my attacker I saw he had his arm outstretched, holding onto a knife.

All of a sudden, my friends told me to look at my arm. "Oh shhh." I now had two holes in my arm and I could see all the way through it. I was shocked. I couldn't believe he really did it. I didn't feel no pain and I wrapped my arm in my shirt. I remembered to apply pressure and stay calm.

Me and my friend began walking towards the nearest hospital. My friend left me at the corner and told me to walk into the emergency room to get my arm stitched up. But I walked in through the main entrance and I walked around lost for a while. Finally, I spotted and employee and asked her to lead me to the emergency room. As I walked in, I started pushing in a piece of skin that was falling out. Then, a nurse came up to me and asked me what was wrong. I showed her my arm and she rushed me into a room. They got my information and took pictures of my wound. Then the doctor came and stitched me up. But all of a sudden, two Gang Task Force officers arrived. The dumb nurse had called them. When they came in, they recognized me and called my …

-G

Contemplation

It starts off as the minutes get low, Thompson gets high. As the blunts get lower, his mind gets slower. He sits for hours doing what high people do, sit in a slum. The highest percentage of blacks have tried or attempted to try this drug that turns the mind slow.

He gets up and leaves his home where he resides. He meets up with two of his friends. They do the same thing every day, for seven days a week. Smoke was on their minds for hours, until the weed man popped up out of nowhere. They bought an eighth of marijuana, smoked half and got thirsty. They got to the store, bought four fifths of hardcore London Vodka.

Thompson and his boys were intoxicated, as that fire water reacted their insides, they began to get vindictive.

Thompson and both of his other friends were walking, as this anger built inside of them, they decided to pull a lick (robbery). They caught a bewildered pedestrian sitting in a 1996 Chevrolet Impala. They ran up to the man and Thompson was the first to swing; he hit the man and provoked him. The man reached under the seat and reached for his fully loaded forty-five caliber magnum handgun. He started to unload all eight shots and both of Thompson's friends hit the ground. It didn't dawn on him that they were shot. He screamed, "Let's go" while the hostile man was reloading his gun. Thompson felt insecure as his boys were not getting up as he called to them.

The man was charging toward Thompson and he took off running once more.

He finally made it to his home and was moving through the rooms with a paranoid look on his face. He finally sat down after twenty-twenty-five minutes of walking around. He stared at a wall and started thinking, as he layed on his bed and dosed off from the sight of the wall.

It was pitch black until a light flashed had broke the silence of the darkness. Then it came in a lot clearer than what it was. People were getting killed, left and right and I wondered why everything was happening. I felt a tug on my leg and looked down and saw a head that had been decapitated from his torso.

The head spoke to me and said, "You must be feeling quite fond of yourself." I didn't know what he meant about that. So, I went ahead and kicked the head as hard as I could, but it wouldn't move. He said, "It's all your fault why I'm like this."

I asked, why is this my fault?"

He said, "You tried to rob people and others ended up hurt. You couldn't finish what you started so everyone went crazy. They started killing everyone, because they expected money and couldn't find nothing."

Then I heard a loud boom and I woke up sweating profusely.

-Thompson

I felt a tug on my leg and looked down and saw a head that had been decapitated from his torso.

Life is Hard in the Ghetto

If I was the last person to bust, I'd be the first to die.
You wanna know why thugs don't cry?
Take a look into my eyes and see I'm hurting a lot.
No father figure in my life, so I run to the block.
The streets taught me how to be a man, never let a person play me.
Always keep my weapon in hand.
I run with my little brother 'cause he got my back.
Money talks to the streets on the block where I'm at.
I ain't got nothing to lose, so I'm going all out selling rocks on the block;
man I'm trying to ball out. A lot of us get caught up taking other roughs.

-Bishop

Gangs and Violence

I remember when I was a young teen I was stabbed
It happened a block away from my house in the afternoon
Me, and Russia and Ghost were walking towards these four Hondurans.
These two Hondurans sell dope on our block, so we went to get money from them.
'When we were in front of them, we told them to give us some money.
They said they didn't have any, so Ghost took off on one of them.
Then I saw one other Honduran take out a knife and try to flip it out, like he was cool,
but it flew in the middle of the street, so we both ran for it, but he got there first,
so I started running. He caught me a block away, so I swung around to punch him,
but missed and he stabbed me in my arm and then in my right side of my back.
By then, Ghost ran on me and Russian came and walked me down a block
where they called an ambulance.
I learned nothing from this experience and it did not change me in any way.
Today I think about it and laugh, 'cause I was screaming like I was gonna die.

-Reus

The First Time

I was walkin' down San Bruno with my boy. We were trying to rob somebody. It was my first time robbing someone, so I was scared.

It was just turning nighttime so all the streets were closing down for the night. The sky was a purplish blue and my boy was talking to me, but I wasn't listening to him – I was inside my thoughts wondering whether I should do it or not. My heart felt as if it was going to jump out my chest. I started sweating all over my face and I got really hot.

I saw this lady come out of this food restaurant with her purse dangling from her arm, and I think the man behind her was her boyfriend.

Without saying anything to my boy, I snatched the purse from the lady and ran as fast as I could. I thought the man was chasing me, but he just jumped up and down telling me to stop and come back. It was broken English, but someone was running behind me, it was my boy.

I ran around the corner up two blocks and then I turned right at a parking lot. The parking lot didn't have any light, so it was really dark. I knew I had to hide, so I jumped in some bushes that were in the corner of the parking lot as I hid there. I looked up into the sky while my heart was racing, wondering if it would ever slow down. As I sat there, I found out what it was that I was scared of. It was not robbing someone, it was getting arrested by the police.

-Marky

I watched from a far distance as the car approached and guns stuck out the window.

Gang Violence

Gang violence in the city is an outstanding factor because of the guns.
Everyone has a gun or access to a pistol.
It's very hard to stay away from this, but it can be done.
From what I have seen, people who are not even raised in these gang environments are somehow drawn to the gang activities
This is a growing problem, as children grown without fathers or positive role models. Young men look for their own role models, father figures or big brothers…
And this will continue to happen.

-W

Life is Hard

My life wasn't a walk in the park.
I spent many nights alone in the cold, lost in the dark.
Me and my sister, nothing but death could break us apart.
Inside I'm Superman, ain't nothing breaking this heart.
Mama ain't raised no punk.
Taught me how to say shhh, never take shhh, even if I wanted it.
And if a boy was like, "what's up?!" Then I leave 'em with lumps.
So that's exactly what I do; I follow mama's rules.
I'm of weed not "D" 'cause that's what my mama do.
I'm thuggin
I'm drug abused: look at me.
I come form the ghetto, why the hell should I be happy?
My hair nappy, plus I grew up poor and I'm still livin' poor.
What I grow up for?

-Bishop

Unreal Facts

Living in Hunter's Point, gang violence was a part of day to day living. Traditional gang culture was very common where I'm from. In BayView, whether you were in a gang or not, you dealt with gang violence. I have dealt with gang violence on every occasion possible. Where I lived in Hunter's Point is where you would call the super danger zone.

I stayed where this particular gang is on the news almost every night for gang violence and warfare. There was somewhat of a major war going on within the community in which I lived over territory.

I myself have witnessed a tremendous amount of violence due to gang related activity. I have seen people murdered, and have also been caught in gang violence myself.

Onetime, I was standing at a nearby bus stop at 6:00am going to school wearing all black. I approached a car who was stopped in the middle of the street, honking the horn at me to come over.

Time and again in my neighborhood where I knew just about everyone, I wasn't thinking about things happening to me due to gang violence, but I was wrong. I approached the resting vehicle slowly to see who was calling me, when suddenly, out of the blue; someone in the back seat jumped up and began shooting at me.

Quickly my mind went right into survival mode as I got out of there, ducking and running, weaving left and right trying not to be shot. I turned around trying to notice my location and also noticing that bullets were just shooting past my feet and past my head. Suddenly as I reached the other neighborhood, I noticed the shooters stopped and sped away.

At that point, I hid in an alleyway near another bus stop until the bus came, hoping the car would not spot me again. I ran into the heart of the hood in which I lived. Just my luck, the gang where I lived was loading up, getting ready to retaliate at the vehicle full of shooters. At that very moment, I spotted the car and ran in the opposite direction alerting the gang members to watch out.

To my surprise, they did not move and began aiming their weapons at the car coming at full speed. I watched from a far distance as the car approached and guns stuck out the window. I turned around and saw more gang members coming out of an abandoned house to the left of me. They noticed who I was and told me to go in the house and get down, but I didn't listen. At that very moment, I got behind a building and just listened to what sounded like a battle in Iraq. In less than two minutes it was over and I looked around the corner to see the aftermath of it all. I was partial to the sight I witnessed when I saw the group standing around in the streets looking at what I assumed was a man down. I dashed over to the crowd and saw the guy in the car doing the shooting at me lying in a pool of blood with his head split wide open. Just then the police came and we all dispersed into separate directions. I hoped I would never see that again but I knew I would. This is a small fraction of what gang violence goes on where I'm from.

-Quad B

Nine

My first experience of gang violence was about when I was nine years old, living in an unsafe neighborhood, where I'd seen the most dangerous things go on. Harbor Road was the projects, anything that was wrong, it was Harbor. I mean rumble fights, selling drugs to using drugs, murders, plenty of them, robberies. Just everything you can think of; it was going on in these projects.

-Pittman

PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Transition Week Is Not Easy

I am not having a good week, because it is my transition week, which means I am getting ready to leave — and I am getting very inpatient! So this is why I'm taking this time to write about how I feel, because I'll be gone soon and I want to be able to change the way I live!

But right now, these females are doing hella too much! So that's one reason why I am ready to leave this place and go to my placement! And it that is also the reason why I am write this. I am going to be to myself right here on the page, because I don't want my anger to be spilling out of me and be getting to someone else. And that is why I am going to worry about myself before speaking on someone else! I mean, I have some issues to deal with right now. For example, my mother has not been coming see me, and so I don't even know what is going on with my family.

I plan to use that as just another reason to remind myself I really need to do what I have to do to get back with my family. I will not run and I will go to this placement, because I really need to be very aware of what I do. I mean to say, I feeling very emotionally confused and I don't know what to do when I leave this place. I do know that I have to do this program for seven months.

-Monique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The thing that's great about this piece, is that you are using your pencil and paper to keep yourself together, just by writing about what you're thinking and how you're feeling. No matter what, as long as you have that strength — to express yourself like this in writing — even with all this pain and stress, you'll be unstoppable! We know you've had to use your hands in the past to protect your siblings and even your mother, but use your hand to push that pencil and you'll be protecting yourself through this difficult journey through the system. And you'll have learned a skill that can help you for the rest of your life. All the best in your new placement!

Poemtree In the Street

noodle, toe jam, cracker, egg mcwaffle
chicken mcnugget, corn dog, egg roll
big-and-tasty extra-large quarter pounder with cheese
peanut butter and jelly, hard-top cracker cookie
clam chowder, cheddar cheese, bacon and grits
malcolm x, rosa parks, martin luther king
bay batter biscuit

-Lil' Man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are a natural poet. Ain't no Satan in these lines, this is God's plenty — but not a God that punishes many or even judges any without mercy, pity, peace and love: Good eats here on earth was always Jesus message from heaven above. When he walked around Judea, taking communion meant everyone eats for free, man!

my mother has not been coming see me, and so I don't even know what is going on with my family

What I Miss

Dear Beat: I know you guys get a lot of stuff saying that someone misses the outs. Well, I actually did the best I could to keep from coming here — but it didn't work. So I might as well get what all I've been missing this past month off my chest. Thanks.

i miss my house
i haven't seen west oakland
in like a month now
i miss my bed
my back hurts and
there's nothing i can do about it man
i miss my blankets
county sheets never again
it's more wool on the floor than the bed
i miss my door that has a knob on the inside
freedom please come back
i miss my boyfriend
i love my baby, i miss my baby
you already know
i miss my games, man
PS2 and Xbox
something like a square bear
i miss my friends, associates, enemies
man i'm'a have to throw me a party — fast
i miss my family
my momma, my cousins
everybody i kick it wit'
i miss my turf
they took me out the west
but they cant take the west out of me
i miss my clothes
i hate pink and i don't even own sweatpants
i miss my shoes
i don't wear the same shoes twice in a month
velcro! — everyday!
i miss my money
i don't grind but i stay with it
man i can't wait to see ben again
i miss my computer
no networking and no download for the i-pod
no nothing
i miss my doctor
i was so sick and all they did
was put me in intake for three days
i miss my shower
seven minutes ain't enough time
to take a sit
let alone a shower
i miss my school
east oakland school of the arts
dumb ass c/o 2008
i miss my homework
here they don't even give homework
come on now, two credits!
i miss my food
county slop ain't it
and even if it is, i don't want it
i miss my lotion
come on now, who really uses
petroleum jelly nowadays
i miss my fridge
i haven't had a cold sprite
in it seems like ages
i miss my freedom!
they say knowledge is power and freedom
and at my house there's plenty of power being used
and people say that i'm smart
now all i gotta do is get up outta here
and i guarantee you when i leave this time
i ain't never coming back

-NuNu, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What can we say after you just blew up the page! We offered the topic and you engaged! And we know all of our readers feel you 'cause they're all going though the same or similar sensations and contemplations. Terrific piece of writing! If quality of writing guaranteed you'd stay free after your release, you'd be home free! But in reality, just saying you won't be back won't do it — you've got to make a list of do's and dont's, then stick to it! We know you can do it, and after reading this piece, we know why, too! So make it true: No more incarceration for NuNu! Peace.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Growing Old Behind Bars

How you Beat readers doing today? Hope you all are keeping that head up and pushing through these hard times, like me. Well, let me get some things off my chest.

I am currently doing time for a violation of my probation, driving with out a license. Not serious ha? But when you got a history of evading police arrest and reckless driving, you get treated like public enemy#1.

I first got locked up in 2003. I won't tell you why, it's not important. And I don't glorify being locked in a cell. People say I look too old to be in here. I'm 17, but look at least twenty. That's why I always go to the county, get finger printed, and then transferred to juvie. I guess that is what The Beat means by "growing old behind bars."

I've known my gang signs since the age of six. And since then, I have almost lost my life three separate times. I haven't been out in society for over two and a half months since '03. Yeah, it's the life I chose, but that's how I was raised. I'm trying to do better so that I don't end up in condemned row, but believe me my people, this is a struggle.

I got a son and love him to death, and that's the reason I'm trying to make a change for the better. Don't glorify being locked up 'cause it ain't even cool. Learn from these mistakes. And keep pushing through. It's nothing, right? I can honestly say I'm proud of myself 'cause I know I'm trying and not quitting to do right. Be safe, and member that tough times don't last but tough people do. Alratos vatos.

-Goofy U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The Beat is also proud of you, Goofy, because we have watched your struggle with this "to be or not to be" question for some time. We admire your honesty for recognizing how difficult change is, but we admire your commitment to your son even more. It seems to us that even though you may still want to be down for your boys, in the long run this can only hurt your son, and you want to avoid that at all costs. We have always found you to be a gifted writer, but we have wondered which side of your inner struggle would ultimately triumph. It's too early to call that one, but it sure looks to us like you have put your feet down on a new path, and that you're beginning to take some tentative steps. With each step forward, the stride will become easier and your life — and that of your son — will become better. Thank you for taking The Beat (and yourself) seriously.

I Want Out

When I first became a teenager, I stepped in the game
thinking the outcome would have changed
by the way that I played. I wanted out without a doubt
'cause I was losin' my brain
'cause it's the same shady ending
and I'm livin' it, man
one step at a time
and I'm losin' my mind
in my early teen years I was out on a grind
but I'm sayin' "Peace, good-bye"
I want to get out of this game on the streets
that I could live without
free from the sorrow, the shame, the hurt and the pain
got my foot up out the door and I'ma leave the game.
I wanted out long ago 'cause it's shady on these streets
and all my brothas out here dying 'cause they deep in the beef.

-Paradise U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's so nice to see your mind unfolding and expanding into adulthood where you're able to judge things for yourself, rather than just accept what was handed to you as a child. Yes, you can definitely live without the game, as so many of your brothers have been unable to do while in the game. Keep your eyes on the prize, and you will continue to rise, Paradise.

Shouldn't Of Done Wrong . . .

Trying to do good and trying to do great.
I wish I could get up and out these gates
that I'm locked up in.
I keep losing but I got to try harder to win.
I keep committing sins
it's a pain to get locked up
because once you do you're stuck
you shouldn't of hopped in that stolen truck.
You should of thought before you said "Yea I can pick that lock."
so we all have to learn to stop
doing what we're doing wrong
got to start doing right and say
no way
to the pipe and if you have hate with people man just try to get along
and jail sucks so I am going to stop doing wrong.
And all you peeps that are locked up will have freedom before long.

-Gunner, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: You speak of hope in the midst of despair. We applaud you for that. You are right to admit responsibility for your actions. Will you begin to think of the consequences before you act? Who are you hanging out with? How do they influence your actions? Choosing the right direction is sometimes difficult, but if you listen to your inner self you will possibly hear the answer....have you listened?

World War Three . . .

If you take a good look, then you would probably see
that all over the world we have started world war three.
People killing each other. Man it's really a shame.
I often wonder what is all this disaster meant to change?
When we turn on the news, nothing is new except the date.
People stealing from each other and woman and kids being raped.
People murdering all over a little change a.k.a. cake.
I read the newspaper and the reports from news stations
report the highest population
or percentage in prisons are blacks
and the news from THE WAR ROOM.
Nations fighting nations, but man over what?
Is it because of a little bit of oil?
So we invade another nation for our nation to spoil.
People committing suicide because they don't feel accepted.
They cry when they die and we as a country don't accept it
and wait for the next person, so they can be rejected.
Cartoons teaching kids how to fight and kill
and want to label us as mentally ill.
Then we see our parents argue, fight, then a divorce,
and then they wonder why we failed our high school course.
But it really sucks to see all these people on drugs,
and teens drinking and driving. Then start poppin' slugs,
and under-aged girls having sex at parties and clubs.
That's just a little taste of what I often see,
and this is what I mean by World War Three.

-Avery, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your lyrical skills are supreme
Living in this world can make us want to scream
What can we do to make our world better?
Is it too late or is it possible for the go getters?
Which camp are you in young man?
Will you give up or will you take a stand?
What kind of future will you stake?
Will you build it on character or only cake?
With your people skills and rhyme
You may go over the top in time
We challenge you to find hope
Please don't sell out your soul to the dope
Your future lies in what you do each day
We know with belief and support you will find a way
To intervene in this world war three
And live a challenging life of integrity.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Best Of Me

HP don't get da best me
My homies ain't the rest of me
Crime we commit is a hardcore test for me
Going to a lifestyle crazy
And we write wild... freedom writin' is what it's called
So let's write down what we have to speak in The Beat Within
Touch our chil-der-ren and come back again
Hold crack again
So they can call you in
And they can set you up
To just mess you up
Greed and anger, I'm the human tamer
My floes is captured so you da gamer
Huntin' with a bow just to see me hang
Now you doin' dumb dirt just to join a gang
Earnin' strikes stealin' bikes, pulling licks, doing tricks
Just to get a thrill from this hard spit
Even though we ain't legit as youth while we prosper
Knowing right from wrong, integrity is proper
Peace love and harmony is what's preached
But it's washed away like a dirty stain with bleach
This the best, my dogs, the best of me when I speak
So I see you next rhyme on time in The Beat.

-Young Qb U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: There is a kind of brave independence in this tight poem, a way of saying that you are you, not defined either by where you live or who your homies are. We think that streak of independence is what will pull you out of the circumstances you've known growing up, and enable you to use your fine mind as it matures into full adulthood. We hope you prosper by going to school (even when it's boring) and moving forward one step at a time. With effort and the will to do it, you should be able to look back on this difficult time in your life from a safe distance of years, and tell the world how it was, how it is, and how it should be.

Pandora's box

locked up in pandora's box
the world done changed
with nuclear wars and artillery shots
my block flooded with coke spots
and corrupt cops
that's how it is
when you locked up in pandora's box
locked up in pandora's box
my ninjas killed by gunshots
family lost by natural causes
health complications the main reason
for my family's losses
i just wait till the time comes
when me and loved ones
rise to the top as well known bosses
but till that time comes
i try and free myself from pandora's box
locked up in pandora's box
in pandora's box
i'm fighting for freedom and peace
my father's gone
and my brother's deceased
my life's an unfinished puzzle
that ceases before completion
people's souls departing their bodies
for wrong reasons
a corrupt government robbing us
but never catch a case
not even treason
it's hard to trust anybody
when they change on you like seasons
that's how it is when you' locked up
in pandora's box

-Kaho, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You'll take a total loss if you try to be a boss in the street. Forget that ghetto fantasy if you want to stay alive and free. Enough loved ones have been buried for all seasons. Why repeat the errors of a government that's lost its reason? It's time to quit and go legit, or you'll never break the locks on Pandora's Box.

What's Going On With Me

Images keep flashin' in my mind like a screenplay
vivid pictures of my past — and future should i say
but what's coming in life seems so unreal
yet the thoughts i had, i could even feel
the pain, anguish — all is a disaster
death's approaching and life goes by faster
my life's complicated but i can't find the missin' piece of puzzle
when a dog got rabies, they put on a muzzle
i can never ever be tamed
not with shackles, not with chains
i run loose like a tiger out of his cage
with emotions from envy to hate and rage
one destination, just trying to achieve my goal
livin' life to the fullest — i cannot lose my soul
i refuse to fail and become a statistic
but at times, i just become realistic
shirt all stained like a girl's lip with some lipstick
got all my folks sayin' how they miss vic
some sayin' how i was just a misfit
cheated on my lady, so she throw a fit
hurt a lot of people, so i got heat on my hip
a mug so hard that i can't move my lips
can't smile, so i walk with a frown
don't take time to know or judge me 'cause my skin color: brown
'cause i dress like a thug, a rebel, a cholo
'cause i got daytons on my ride and it ride so low
but ain't no one really understand me
they can't get past the image they see
assume i sell drugs and destroy families
someone to rid of — like a dog hatin' fleas
they can't stand to see a latino like me succeed
like to see us kill each other, make ourselves bleed
no next generation, death before we plant a seed
we can't stay comfortable, get overwhelmed by greed
instead of takin' one, we decide to take two
get locked up but continue what we do
no one ever gives us a sense of direction
can't control ourselves, like a young boy with an erection
politics ain't me, so i skip the elections
go for the head, then one to the midsection
ruthless — but more to that on the inside
face evil, head up, never known to hide
two sides to me 'cause i'm a gemini
at times the two decide to collide
i get lost in my own thoughts, in my own mind
so i just write, not knowin' what i'll find

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You find the inside displayed without, when you put pencil to the page and let your thoughts flow out. But don't just settle for that, look in the mirror and face the facts. You still write like you're out there where no one cares, but you're in here where more care less — but we've been pointing you past all that stress toward doing your best to change first your heart and then your brain. Always let it flow, let your inner truth show, but take it into your heart and let hope grow. First for your soul, then for your life as a whole. Life to the fullest is not mean-mugging while dodging bullets. If you can't go back to where you're from 'cause of some of the dirt you've done, then it's time to move on. You're not a child anymore. Send your family a piece of your legitimate paycheck forevermore, but move across country if that's what it takes to remove trouble from your door. When you walk free, do not return to that same old losing mentality or the fate you will seem to have escaped will return with a vengeance in reality. Stop saying no one cares — look into yourself and see the soul in there. That square with a wife, a house and children, is living life to the fullest — why aren't you willing to give it a try? The dark romance of a bitter thug halfway wanting to die, is not even close to fully living your life!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

actually have something to do. When people called me, it felt good to say, "I'm at work."

Farewell To My Streets

Farewell to my streets
The streets I smoked on
The streets I popped on
The streets I slanged on
Farewell to my streets
The streets I fought on
The streets I repped on
The streets I protected
Farewell to my streets
That I lived on
And the streets I learned on
That I loved and will always love
Farewell to my streets

-Gurper Baby, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We would love to read a poem as well written as this one that talks about the other side of the streets — the side that has led you to say farewell.

Goodbye To The Streets

You've seen me at my worst
You've seen me at what I thought was my best
You've seen me do a lot of scandalous shhh
You've seen me get locked up
You've seen me sober
You've seen me high as a kite
There were times when I thought we would always be together
There were times when I hated you
There were times when I loved you
It's a trip
I look back on the streets now
And I ask myself, "What the hell was I doing?"
We've been through a lot together
But not forever
I will not let you take me down
This is goodbye...
For good

-Unknown, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: How could you write such a powerful poem and not put your name on it? We wish we knew who we are giving props to, but whoever you are, this is a great poem, and an even greater declaration of independence!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Stepping My Game Up

It's about that time for me to step my game up! I continue to get myself into situations that are getting harder and harder to get out of. I been on some other shhh since I came back up in here.

I told myself last time I left that I wasn't coming back to this place. Then, when I first got home, I was doing a bunch of dumb stuff — until I got hit by a car — and after that I corrected myself, got myself on some work shhh.

People make excuses always saying they' patnas be getting at them wrong 'cause they chose to do something positive. All of that be bullshhh, 'cause my patnas was telling me to try and get something legit going on! I had to step my game up and get a job and stop messing with the hood like that. It felt a lot better to get up every morning and actually have something to do. When people called me, it felt good to say, "I'm at work."

This so-called gangsta shhh that everybody got going on, it ain't worth a shhh. Nobody even have any rules no more! Every time I look around, I see immature youngstas all running they' mouth about a bunch of lil' girls. Everybody want' to feel bad, so they' running they' mouth 'bout shhh that ain't never 'posed to be talked about.

And for that I'm through with these fake-ass kids. When I hit the streets I'm going back to my job and staying solid and keep moving forward instead of backwards.

-Turk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece has a lot of truth coming hard with the facts. No one in the game can have your back the way fools are starting to act. So why go back to the game when you know it will lead you to more pain: jails, hospitals and/or death. We wish all those talking about "keepin' it gangsta" would save their breath! When you say it feels good to get up and go to work, to answer the phone and say, "I'm at work," — man, you're one of the first to break the news! Working a day job isn't for foo's — nah, it actually feels coo'! And staying free is for you not just a ghetto fantasy but a stand-up man's reality!

If I Die

if i die, let me die
just bury me high
hurry up and get it over
'cause i'm dying inside
but my ma said
if i ain't scared to die
then was life worth it
but it ain't worth shhh
but pain and hurt with
me having visions
nightmares of my death
on the sidewalk bleedin'
as i breathe my last breath
everyday i lose something
'till i ain't got nothing left
and when i try to go right
i end up goin' left
it's like i'm climbing up steps
but i ain't reaching the top
and the demons in my head
just want me to drop
but god on the other hand
is waitin' for me at the top

-Jesus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Take God into your heart right now, a living and loving God who will slowly show you how to escape the demons in your dreams that howl for your death. With every breath in, feel God's inspiration as the his Spirit flows in; with every breath out, that's death enough till the next breath begins. If guilt and fear fill you with dread, just pray for forgiveness for the life you've led — and become a blessing to others, starting right now, instead. It doesn't have to be big things you do to prove the blessing of love, mercy and forgiveness lives in you ... just moment to moment, let a living and a loving God shine through. Soon in your dreams the demons will scream in fear and mercy, pity, peace and love in you make them disappear.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Growing Old Behind Bars

I got a few big homies growing old behind bars because they made a few mistakes in the past. Now they all in the federal doing over fifteen years and twenty-five years, and I know they all think about they shouldn't did what they did. When I go up there to see them, tears come down my eyes because I know they could've did something better in life. When I talk to them, they just told me, don't do what they did. And when I see them, I be mad I can't touch none of them. But I just ball my fist up an' put it up to the glass an' tell them I love them, and walk out with tears in my eyes and think about what I got to do in the long run.

-Young JT U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have some of the same experiences you describe visiting friends who are serving very long prison sentences for the mistakes they've made, and like you, we find it very, very sad. You wrote that after you visit your friends, you think about what you have to do "in the long run." Can you share with The Beat some of those things that you think you have to do? How will your future be different from your past so that you won't grow old in prison?

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good is when me and my loving wife traveled down south for the summer. When we got down there that was the first time I have seen my big sister in two years. So when she took me out to her apartment, I got to hold my baby nephew and twin niece. For three months we been down there. I got hella love for my baby nephew. Just getting to know ma little ninja was one of the times I felt really good in life.

-Young Neel U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Where in the South did you travel? How did you get there? How long were you able to stay? Would you ever consider moving there? Why do you say you have "hella love" for your baby nephew but you don't say the same thing about your baby niece? What does your sister do down there? When do you think you'll be able to visit again?

Velcro Straps

You can't walk a mile in velcro straps. Hell, you can barely walk a mile in Forces! There comes a time in life when there's going to be a situation that you can't handle, whether it's your fault or not. The mind is a terrible thing to waste, but the mind has ways of thinking that it can work things out on its own when in reality some things you need help with, while others you don't.

If you're living in poverty, always broke, look for a job; don't go rob nobody — 'cause then you're going to be stuck in velcro straps. If you've got a job and still money ain't coming fast enough, don't go prostitute, especially not on East Fourteenth Street (aka International Boulevard), unless you think it's sexy sporting velcro straps! You want to prove you're right in a confrontation, don't "take off on who you mad at" — unless you want to sport velcro straps!

Needless to say, almost everyone locked up wants to be free. That's a given. But the thing is — when you get your freedom, what are you going to do to keep it? What I'm saying is: Try to stay away from them Peaks, Turntecs, Pro Fleets, and any other off-brand shoes with velcro straps. Good luck and stay solid!

-NuNu, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For the few readers who don't have a clue what NuNu means by stay away from velcro straps, in Alameda County it's the required footwear of j-cats and hall-rats, meaning any detainee separated from his or her freedom. With that in mind, you can't miss NuNu's meaning! Just like she says, everyone wants to be free, but what you gonna do to make it reality? It takes a true and deep change in mentality. And sure, everyone needs money, but if you're not all about your freedom, that money-making will be over before the end of the season. Keep spitting truth NuNu, just like you do!

The Last Time I Felt Good

The last time I felt good was when I got a job at Marine World. I felt I was the happiest man alive. I got to put on the uniform and my badge. I also was in a group home when this happened, so I felt I really good. I felt good because it's at a famous place that people pay money to go to. And for the people that don't think you can get a job, it's not hard. It's really easy. Just follow instructions or become interested, before you know it, you'll have it.

-C-M U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It would be fun and exciting to work at Marine World, so we can see why you would feel so good to get that job. It's too bad that you're here now, and now there. What happened? It appears that getting the job was easier than keeping it... Any chance you could get your job back when you get out from under this situation? Did you get to work directly with any of the animals? What was your job?

Today Is the Next-to-the-Worst Day In My Life

Man, have y'all ever taken the time to notice the good days and the bad days in your life? I mean like when you wake up in the morning, have you ever thought that today is going to be a good day, or a bad day, 'cause you wake up in a place of horror a place like Alameda County Juvenile Hall, or a group home where people don't care, or CYA.

I mean, what I'm trying to say, even though I'm in a horrible place, every morning I wake up and I'm like, "Man, I wanna have a good day!" Yet I can't help but realize that there's going to be something that's going to piss me off in a place like this — there's going to be someone that's going to get at me foul, and I can't take off on 'em, 'cause I don't want to get pepper sprayed!

Man, I'm going to wake up in the morning and want to be at home! I know that! Yet I can't go home now, whether or not I put myself in this situation. Today is the next-to-the-worst day in my life — simply because I no longer believe in tomorrow! As long as I'm in here, I'm forced to think my life as yesterday! But when I think about all those yesterdays, I'm doomed to another hopeless tomorrow.

-NuNu, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have been thinking and writing so well, that is to say, the thoughtfulness and insight you've displayed in your writings for The Beat, fill us with hope for your tomorrow — or should we say future tomorrows. Meanwhile, just take each day one day at a time. Tell yourself, just for today I will not let these people or this place have me stressing, angry and ready to strike out. Learning to handle stress (and the provocation of mean-spirited fools) without "taking off on" them, is an important life skill to master. Maybe there were times when violence might even have saved your life, but now those behaviors (those reactions) stand in the way of your freedom. Don't lose your temper on the one hand, or hope on the other. And remember that sometimes you're actually doing a lot better than you're feeling!

Growing Old Behind Bars

Growing old behind bars is an epidemic.
I have been in and out of the hall since I was about ten years old
I am sixteen, damn near seventeen now. And I am back in the hall.
I am not going to lie, when I was young I use to like coming to jail
because when I got out I had a little respect.
When I was twelve years old I started to get more and more respect
by the kids on the block. But as they say, I got older and got wiser.
So now that I am in jail I am starting to get stuck in this system more and more everyday.
What I'm trying to do is just give all the youngsters that are starting out advice.
Turn it all around before it's to late.

-Young Wesley, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Did anyone try to give you advice when you were 10 or 11? If yes, why didn't you listen? What could someone older have said that would have made a difference. Or were they all like you are now? Still getting in trouble and trying to tell the youngsters not to do like they do. You've got to walk it like you talk it Young Wesley.

Never Again

I came in having a boyfriend. I thought a boyfriend was suppose to support you and be there when you needed him the most. Be there through thick and thin. I thought he cared, he acted like he did sometimes. Other times he lied, cheated and most of all made me look like a fool. I feel so stupid for thinking he cared and that he was gonna be there till the end.

I came back Valentine's Day and haven't received so much as card or a short letter. Is that too much to ask for? I don't think so. When I get out I want to see him one last time and let him know how I feel, and why he left me hanging. I gave him everything I had, but all he did was take my kindness for a weakness.

Never again will I be so stupid, never again. I swear.

-Malina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope you stick to your words and have truly learned from what happened. If during your relationship you saw that he couldn't be trustworthy, what made you think or believe that he could? If you were to see him for closure purposes, would your emotions or hearing his words sway what you're now saying? Sometimes we have different definitions and expectations of others. It may be good to find out these things beforehand. What do you think?

Farewell Speech To The Block

To the block: It's been several months and I've been locked up. So by me being on the block getting money and did nothing else. But go to school, get out, and go to the block when I get out of school. That's all I was doing when I was out.

So now by me going to CYA, when I get out, I'm gone stop being on the block how I was. But getting money is all I know. I got to do something else with my life.

To those on the block, we all know it's hot and now we need to get off the block and do something else. Stop getting money the bad way and get money the right way. By getting a job and have fun without being on the block. We got money but want more. But look at where it got me, in here going to CYA.

-Girly, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope this is true and your mind is really made up. Right now, you have the time to prepare yourself for when you get back out. What are some things that you can do for yourself with this time? Do they involve graduating from school and learning a trade you could use for a job? How about the self classes that are available? You may not know what you'll need exactly, so it may be wise to get as much as possible. Pursue your thoughts of having a better and fun life without being on the block. Some may hold you to what you say. But maybe you should hold yourself accountable to your own words.

Why I Cry?

Why I cry you ask
why does the innocent die
I cry silent tears alone
at night fearing the darkness
doesn't take me, why I cry you ask
I know I won't make it
in the cold in the morning
will food come or will
my stomach beat a silent tune,
why I cry you ask
'cause I know my mother cry
for me
but still I do wrong but don't realize the hurt
she endures
at night silent tears
while father holds her
that's why I cry.

-Lil' Sadaam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Powerful piece you create on crying. The tears you write about could change for the better when you make better choices on how to live your life.

Once Upon A Time. . .

As a child I told myself a lot of things I would and would not do in my life, changing my goal or dream from time to time. I grew up confused about a lot of things – at home, at school, in my neighborhood.

At around the age of eleven and twelve my eyes were opened, so to say. I looked at my surroundings differently. I began doing the very things I always said I wouldn't do. On the inside I thought it was right but on the outside I denied ever doing such things.

Starting at eleven years old up, until now, I did whatever it took to get money, even involving myself with the wrong males. Every once in a while I would come back home, come back to the old me and do the right things in order to keep a good reputation with my family.

Who would have thought I would experience so much at the young age of fifteen? In fact, I don't believe anyone will ever understand.

-A young teen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You may be surprised by how many people share those same experiences. The important thing is that's all behind you now. Is this the case or do you plan on going back? Some may, or may not understand, but it may be good to just get that out. What's important to you now? Do you think trying to live a double life, so to speak, eventually led to what happened? Can you set boundaries that you can respect and live by now? Your choices now will greatly affect your future. We'd like to believe that you're smarter and wiser from what you've been through.

Known As Sweetness

S is for: Sexy
W is for: Wild
E is for: Elegant
E is for: Extra Sweet
T is for: Top of the line
N is for: Naughty
E is for: Extraordinary
S is for: Stress free
S is for: Special

My name is Gina. I'm 17 and a half. A mother of a three-year-old little girl. A child in foster care, promoted to juvi, lost in the fast street world. Yeah, I love money. Chose a man over my family. Picked drugs over my baby. Been gunned down, and beat down to the ground.

-Gina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for being honest and sharing a piece of yourself with us all. It seems like you have been through a lot and you're fortunate to still be here sharing your story. You considered yourself lost, so are you now finding your way back? Are there people who can assist you along the way? Is someone trustworthy watching over your daughter now? Where is reuniting with your family in your plans? Is this something important to you? Sounds like you are getting up from all you've been through. We look forward to hearing more of your story and hope you're able to get real control of your life.

Every Day

Every day is a day
closer for me to go home to my baby and my family
Every day is a day
closer for me to graduate from high school
Every day is a day
closer to my dreams
Every day is a day
closer to a world of love and peace
Every day is a day
closer to a place of hope and happiness

-Marie, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We love this forward-looking poem, full of hope for a better future. It is there, waiting for you.

Staying Away From YGC

The last time I felt good was when I was with my boys and we were just sittin' on top of my friend's roof staring at the beautiful night sky. Smoking a cigarette starting at the stars and just talking about our day.

Also the last time I felt rally good was when I was having a real family dinner, eating, talking, joking and playing around. I had fun and I miss that. I can't wait till I'm gone from YGC and I'm gonna stay away from YGC.

-TSG U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Isn't it strange how the simplest things in life can bring us the most pleasure. We hope that the next time your are able to stare at the night sky with your boys, or share a fun meal with your family, you will remember how hard it is to give these things up so that you'll never lose them again.

Poetically Acclaimed

My words travel at a high velocity I'm at the city' highest spot All who are present Beware of the poetically acclaimed one I speak with fire Desire me to speak more? Don't get life on death row And die on the hospital ward I speak accordingly If you think I'm playing Ask about me, the poetically acclaimed It's a shame That you're not on black ice In the middle of the sea With a black beast You bought from the black market From a guy who belongs to the black hand society And is dying a black death You heard it from me But don't tell nobody I said it -Hmd LCRS, SF/YGC From The Beat: Poetically Acclaimed One, we appreciate that you speak with fire in your soul and your warnings to people not to end up on death row, but what's up with writing to someone that it's a shame they're not abandoned in the middle of the sea on black ice, etc? We don't understand who you're writing to or why you'd want to condemn anyone to such a fate.

Inside The Battlefield When ninjas touch back down on the block, it's gonna be a war zone. It's gonna be like a World War and back to the frontline. People don't understand, but it really is the frontline. I'm a have to be up to par, 'cause ninjas been down for a minute. But you know what it is? It's part of the movement!!

A lot of soldiers have fallen, but never been forgotten. And the ones still breathin' is the ones still achieving. Only the strong survive.

-Young Casper LCRS

From The Beat: From this angle you're one of the strong ones, and you're about to be off the Ranch and back in the war zone. What's the attraction? What is the movement? You don't know! We've heard these foolish takes over the years too. Why don't you seriously consider an alternative to the frontline now? You can stop your part of the war any time you want. Don't you owe it to your life to stay alive? Go Go Go! I am going home Man, I been up here for a year An' two to three months I am so happy You know I am going home!!! -Weather Man LCRS From The Beat: You go, Weather Man. You've written many thoughtful little poems from your heart for The Beat. We wish you safety, fun and success on the outs!

I Was Sober

I liked being sober
Mary Jane, I didn't love her
I didn't like rocks
I didn't smoke pot
But everything changed
When my life was rearranged
I turned into a pot head
I love when my eyes turned red
I was drunk all the time
The cops said I was on the line
Isn't it strange
How life changed
I put my life on the line
When I tried it the first time

-Benito, Marin

From The Beat: We like how you were able to put your thoughts together. Do you think being sober contributes to you having a clear mind, and way of thinking? Now that you're sober, do you feel you need drugs and/or alcohol in your daily life? Are the possible consequences from using drugs and/or alcohol worth the momentary change of mood? Why, or why not?

Shot, Then Arrested — Shady!

I'm pretty sure a lot of you who watch the news, heard about the shooting at Hayward BART. Well, I was shot that day. I was one of the victims in the shooting, along with my cousin and one of my friends.

Now, after I was shot, I left the BART Station and tried to run to my house, and the police saw me running. So they tried to stop me, but I kept running and hit a gate. After I hid for about a hour and a half, I came out — and there were two helicopters flying over where I was standing! So by then I was starting to get dizzy and sweaty from losing so much blood, and I knew I wasn't gonna get away anyway, so I gave myself up and came out.

Me, being a innocent civilian, I came out — and the police arrested me! And an officer accused me of pointing a gun at her! But I asked how come she didn't shoot me if I it was true that I had a gun pointing at her, and she said that all she had was a taser. So, to make a long story short: I'm being held for something I did not do!

They're trying to give me two years in CYA for nothing! Now, tell me: How shady can five-oh get?

-Damo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That is quite a story! We remember when the story was in the papers, and it was corrected to say that the shooter was still at large, after first reporting that the shooter had been apprehended. Our pages aren't really the place to argue your case, but it does seem to be adding insult to injury, or emotional injury to physical injury for you to be now facing CYA time. Are they accusing you of somehow having provoked the crime? What is the accusation against you?

When The Judge Let Me Go

The last time I felt good was when they let me go, because I don't like this place. But I felt good when the judge told me that she was go' give me another chance to get on top of my game before I be somewhere like the Ranch or Glen Mills.

So when I get out, I got to be on my game, so I don't got to go there. Then I could be at home and really feel good with my family and go to school and really feel better. So when I get out, I'm go do what I got to do, so I could feel really good an' get out the system. I am out.

-Young JT U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: By following what the judge has told you to do, you show that you are maturing into a responsible young man. It is your growing maturity that will help you the most as you move forward. Going to school is a very important part of your plan, so we want to encourage you to follow through on your promise — even when you find it boring. If you fail to do what you say you're going to do, you will not only be letting the judge down (and be facing consequences you'd rather not have to deal with), you'll also be letting yourself down, and nobody wants to do that!

Building Sand Castles At The Beach

The last time I was feelin' good was when I was at the beach with my ninjas right after school. We went there at that time because the tides go up higher, so that's just enough time to build castles and tunnels, so the tide would come through them. That day I looked at the ocean and it was on of the best views I remember, because it was sick chilling with the homies, and not having to worry about anything. I feel really relaxed laying on the sand. After the water messed it, we threw big rocks on it to destroy it.

Oh, did I mention, a lot of people admired our work, because we were the only ones there building sand castles. Then we went to 7/11 to get some food. After that, we just went home.

-Weapon LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds like a great day to remember. What would it take for you to be as free-minded as you were that day, most days now? You sound like you were almost a kid again.

Straight From The Heart

I see the world as a distraction
My ex could have been my baby mama
Til' she had that abortion
Gotta love it, 'cause all I think about
Is money, sex, jewelry, white tees, gangs and jets
But what is it to all? Not helping a bit
Thinkin' of others, but wanna get rich
But who got envy is nothin' but a myth
Wanna hit a home run, hopin' not to miss
Love this fresh air, like I used to love this chick
Reminiscing make me smile, 'cause the old days I miss
Wanna get married one day and have kids
But 'til then, I'm a do it like this...

-Famoso LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It can really profoundly hurt a young man when his lady has an abortion, especially when he has nothing to say about it. It's good that you're into a lot of other things in your young life, and you certainly think deeply about everything. We hope you find a way to develop your many talents and interests into work you really enjoy, so you can become rich, like you dream of doing. But doing it like this...? If you're referring to whatever brought you into juvy now, maybe you'd better think of something legal to base your fortunes upon.

Help Me Find My Way

I don't have everything.
As a matter of fact I don't have anything
Except a dream of a better day
And you to help me find my way
Being a man I am sure to make mistakes
But to keep you I would do all it takes
And if it meant my love was really true
I'd gladly die and watch over you
I wish you knew how much I cared
You'd see my love is true by the life we'd share
Even if you changed your mind and said our love was through
I'd want to die, continuously cry, and still I'd love you

-Ke'mar U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, Ke'mar. It's not your usual love poem that announces something like everything will be all right if you just keep this love. No, you realize that everything is not all right, and that you will make mistakes because you are human, but that love as strong as this can help you avoid those mistakes or pick yourself up after making them. We don't think you have to die to prove your love, but you do have to find a way out of this situation and then make a commitment to stay out of this situation. In other words, you have to put her and the love you have for her above the love you have for any other activity in your life that might take you away from her. When you say you don't have anything "except a dream of a better day," we think that's a lot. Keep that dream alive, and make it come true!

The Girl You Lost

A person like me
The type that can't be fooled
If I know you tryna play me,
Still I won't be rude,
'Cause I'm familiar with the situation
Run dem games
But if you tryna put me in it
Then you gone get played
Thought it was serious
I'm laughin'
'Cause you didn't peep the real
But check it out, young playa
I'ma tell you how I feel
And what's the deal
I'm gone keep making it happen
I stay woke wit' my shhh
While you nappin'
I'm mackin'
We both young
I'm just a lil' bit more mature
I said, "You mess wit' me
You stuck wit me"
Now that shhh right out the door
So if you lookin' for a lover
Get your sideline whore
I'm not a store
Nobody can buy my love
But now you thought that you were different
Psych! A fake-ass thug

-LaDonna, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: The passion and strength of this poem tells us that you respect yourself, which means you won't let a boy (who calls himself a man) disrespect you. Good for you! You're worth way more than that.

My Life Story

I'm going to tell you a story about my life. My name is Lil' Sammy. I was born in East Oakland, and maybe you know me. But now I just want to say I was running the streets at the age of seven, and I was hella bad. I did not listen to nobody.

I just wanted to be grown, but I was not thinking clearly. So I started stealing from people. I was stealing money. I did not listen to nobody. I did not care. After that, I started going into people's houses, going through their windows.

And after that, I met my best friend, Fatboy. Me and this dude were doing hella dirt. People were scared of us, me and him. And brother, he was solid! Nobody wanted to see us. He use to be doing hella dirt on the turf. (To be continued.)

-Lil' Sammy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In recovery, they call these "war stories" — when you tell stories about the days when you weren't thinking so clearly. They're dangerous because you can pull your mind right back into that old insanity just telling the story. For example, you sound proud that people were scared of the two of you. You've got to rise above the street if you want to keep shackles off your feet.

My Brother And I Were Free For Easter

Hey, Beat, it's your girl, Roch. Well, the last time I was happy was when I and my brother got out together on Easter and got to go home, and then went shopping for Easter. And it was cool, 'cause the family got together and me and my brother was just happy to be out and spend time with my brothers and sister. And I got to chill with the homies and the family, all. When we got home, I finally got to sleep in my bed and the end, but, yup, that was when I was happy.

-Sarah, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: Although your description of going home and being with your brother and family at Easter is sweet, but it must make you sad as Easter approaches again not to be home now. Let this program give you the tools you need so that next time you're home, that's where you'll be able to stay.

How To Act White

This is for all the other little white boys and girls out there who don't quite know how to act while in the system. So, here I am to help all you crackers out there (I'm white, too, so don't get all offended) and give you a few tips on being white, scrawny, and from the suburbs, like me.

Tip #1: Never, EVER, use any racial slurs unless they are honky, cracker, whitey, and also are clearly used in a joke-like matter. Tip #2: If you are from any type of suburb, don't front and try to 'rep' for your 'posse', because most likely your 'posse' consists of four other scrawny little fifteen year olds who have never seen a gun (let alone 'bust a cap' in someone's butt).

Tip #3: Do not, no matter what, act black! Yes, I said it out loud, and I now fear for my own scrawny white arse. Yet if you are white and act like you're from the 'hood, you are a wangster, a wigger, a dumb-butt cracker. All us, even you, know what I'm talking about. Tip #4: Just sit down and be quiet. If you stay unnoticed and you try your best to stay white, you might not get sharked!

So good luck, all my Caucasian brothers and sisters. Stay strong, stay white, and keep on being 'The Man'. Much loves to all my homie gee's! PEACE OUT! (By the way this was a joke. So I hope you all had a good laugh! Au Revoir.)

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for a little levity in a 'zine that a few have told us they don't read because it's all just too painful to read about. We hope all of our readers take it in the good-humored spirit in which it was written, but as they say, there's always some hater around to get it twisted. And for those who don't speak French, au revoir means — till we see each other again ... in the pages of The Beat Within ... don't lose that toothy grin.

Life Goes On

Life goes on, but it gets no better
Wondering if I still have ta keep a thang under my sweater
Everybody going to jail or either dying
And more and more family are crying
Crying over the lost and the dead
'Cause when he died, he could have been at home, sleep in his bed
He's dead, but time still tick and tock
But tomorrow somebody a die under the same sun
Maybe even killed by the same gun
Maybe a semi-automatic, I don't know
But by the rate we dying, it's like a river current flow
But will the clock stop? Or will it keep goin'?
But will the young ladies stay off the corners?
But will the clock stop? I think not
But until it do, I'll be on the block

-Too Militant U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: First, you don't know whether life gets better or not, because you are still a boy in the process of maturing into a man. Not you, nor anyone else, knows what the future holds. One thing we feel strongly about, though, is that by keeping "a thang under (your) sweater," you greatly reduce the chances that things will get better in your life. Guns — especially in the hands of boys — tend to make those who are holding them feel stronger than they are, more able and willing to jump into beef that they might have avoided if they weren't packing. We've seen far too many examples of the trigger pulling the boy (leading to the boy pulling the trigger) with tragic consequences for everyone involved. You are not responsible for whether anyone, ladies or men, will stay off the corners and off the block. You are only responsible for your own actions, so when you tell us that you'll be back on the block (even when you are able to tell us so in a fine poem), we believe you are writing a prescription for yourself that includes giving up even more of your precious freedom to a cold system that cares nothing about you. We wish you would reconsider.

I'm Saying Bye Bye

Farewell to the streets. I'm saying bye bye to the streets, peace. When I have another chance for freedom, I won't take it for granted.

-Young Rob, Marin

From The Beat: The only person that can really stop you from taking advantage of your freedom is yourself. As you start to do other things to keep your freedom, you'll see that you'll have little time to do what will get your freedom took. Are you just saying this, or are you serious? What are some of the productive things that you do to fill your time? Take advantage of the time you now have to come up with a plan!

Struggling With Myself

I really need not to be around other people and their issues but to be by myself right now, because getting annoyed by others right now is not a good place for me to be!

So I want to stay to myself for now, because it is my transitions week and I need to stay calm. But I really just got "called out of my name" today, and it really hurt my feelings. I got my feelings hurt by someone else, so I am just trying to stay to myself right now and calm myself down.

It is also a really hard for me because I have to be away from my mother. I really am going to miss the people I really love when I go away to this placement for seven months, and at the same time — they are acting like they don't care about me! I mean my mother didn't even come to see me. So I really think there is something serious going on with my family, and I am kind of scared. I don't want to runaway from my placement, and this is just making it harder for me to stay calm and do what I need to do. So it is really going to be hard for me to stay there, but I know I have to do it.

-Monique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're doing exactly the right thing in admitting your feelings, 'cause a feeling all by itself never killed anyone. But you're also right not to be acting on this feeling of panic and loneliness. Let your family's silence just be silence. Sometimes just everyday life overwhelms people, and no news isn't bad news at all. In fact, why not assume no news is good news until you learn otherwise. And if you do get bad news, don't make it worse by running from your placement and having a warrant out for you — or you'll end up going through all this unpleasantness all over again! Do it right. Don't run, no matter what!

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good was when my nephew was born. I saw him come home and my heart jumped. It was such a surprise. I wish I could go back to the time. Now he is growing up and I experience new amazing things about my nephew.

I am heart broken in juvenile hall because I can't take care of him and be there when he needs me.

Also my lady: I love her to and can't be there for her either. But that is all going to change in a month or two. I will be there for my nephew and lady before it is to late and I lose both of them.

I am falling apart in here. And it is really tearing me apart mentally. I am constantly crying on the inside. I can't call them on the phone because there is nobody that accepts collect calls. I hate life. I learned my lesson and I am still in here. That sucks. I don't ever know when I'm getting out. It has pissed me off so much, I want to go crazy. I live day by day and for nothing and nobody. I want to have my life back. I can't believe my life is this way. I hate myself.

-Jeff, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know if you are beating yourself up just because you're locked up or if there are other things on the outs that you've don't that bother you. But first, we have to remind you that while your time seems like an eternity, it is slowly ticking away and you will be back out wit your loved ones. We think there is something really positive in what you're saying. The most important thing is that you really feel the loss of your freedom, maybe in a way that many of the young detainees do not. Therefore you will treasure your freedom all the more when you get out and try to do the right thing. Don't hate yourself! It won't do you any good. Instead start planning how you're going to pick up the pieces when you get out so you can hit the ground running. We know you'll be fine.

A Helping Hand

To you, da girl dat made a change on my life. Befo' you, I was just anotha ninja out dere stealin', smokin', drinkin' an' poppin', doin' dumb stuff that was gone kill me. But den I met you. You came into my life an' showed me what love and trust really is. You took me in off da streets when I had nowhere to go. You put clothes on my back an' food in my belly. I'm glad you came into my life an' showed me all the things you did and taught me what I know.

All I would do is run from group homes and sell drugs ta get money, but now you got me to turn my life around an' go back to jail. I'm not gone run from my next group home. I'm a stick dem 9-12 months out. I'ma get a GED. I'ma get a job to be able to support us an' be able to get our own place.

Everybody deserves a second chance. You gave me mine and I love and thank you fa it. Be ready, 'cause when I'm out, we doin' it big.

-P-Smokez U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have met someone who has had such a profound effect on your life. We're not sure why you didn't love yourself enough to make these changes on your own, but we're glad you have made the firm decision to get out from under the situation you're in, and to keep yourself from ever getting back into this situation again. With her help and your plan to get your GED and move forward with your life, your future should be much better than your past. Good luck.

This Time Around

This time around it is my eighth time in here, in the hall. I have been sitting in my room thinking about all the great things besides the street that I have. I mean I got a mom, dad, my twelve-year-old sister, eight-year-old sister, eight-year-old brother and eeleven-year-old brother at home with me. I know they all love and really care about me.

Just a few days ago I was sitting in my room imagining myself in the Pen doing life for a murder or something like that. I notice that really the only people who will be with me when I get out is my blood family.

I see it this way: I could get off the street, stay in school, keep my grades up, get a well paying job, be on the outs making something of myself in a productive way instead of being on the streets going banging and looking behind me all the time. That's what I am gone do this time around. I am out.

To all y'all doing time, be safe. Wish you luck.

-Young Squeek, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like the way you think! We're glad you cam e to the realization about your family versus your gang. How would your family feel if you got shot or killed because of your gangbanging ways? Now the question is how are you going to get out?

Those Words

I've suffered being behind bars, 'cause all the staff keep telling me, "There's a food limit", "... outside limit", not even bedtime is unlimited! I'm used to having the freedom to go over any limit anytime I want to — but in here, never! I'm so sick of it.

But now I've finally figured out the facts about the life I've lived. I would like to get those old thoughts off my mind and to throw my bad history away. I mean, now I have to take a big step ahead in life because now I have important choices to make. I was talking to my girlfriend, and she said, "I'm for you. No matter what you did, I know it's not the real you! But you should've thought twice before you did something so wrong. Next time you're tempted to do something wrong, why don't you just think about me for two seconds?"

I was inspired by her words, knowing that she really loves me and I love her. So when I get out of jail, I know I'll be with her, and she always be on my side, no matter what. I'm ready to make a promise right now: "I will never break the law." Once I make a promise, I keep it. I'm as true to my word as the gatekeeper to heaven. But one thing will never change: the ghetto way!

-Dizzy Bird, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You need to be very careful how you define ghetto then. Keep the ambition, the determination, the will to overcome all odds and all obstacles, but put all that effort into a legal hustle and into get your high school degree. And don't test her love, just keep your own promise — no matter what! Now you know that freedom is not only a privilege, it is also a responsibility. Use it well, or lose it and live in a cell. But remember that it's "an inside job" — desire what's good and right, and follow the law written on your heart!

A Lot of Things Happen Behind Bars

growing old behind bars
only build inner scars
they always want to
get in your face
shakin' up that stupid mace
but if they were in our place
they could never
see us face to face
in this place
we meet new friends
on the outs
we never see them again
tryin' to think how
we could have been
if we could have been
with our inmate friend
somewhere in here
we fall in love
but on the outs
the person look' like a scrub
do you run away
or act like its cool
everybody go' see you
with this bummy dude
we hope you're not lying
about what you have
because on the outs
we're going to cross paths
and when we see you
you better speak
because everyone knows
you were in love with me
we're two of a kind
and i am a dime
so when i see you on the out
can you be mine

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You never fail to amaze us when you seriously put your mind to writing phrases with wit and rhyme, whether it's about life in the free world or "behind bars" doing time. This poem does it all, makes us laugh, but also feel a little raw, 'cause feelings that run deep behind bars seem so often to get lost in the traffic when you're out riding in a new car — or even an old one, with the window rolled down, painting the town after the sun has gone down. Just please, Aleshia, don't throw away your freedom after your release!

Done With Gang Banging

I'm saying farewell to the streets. I'm done with gang banging, even though they gave me streets smarts and all my emotions, happiness and sadness--from watching homies fall, to us all kicking it together. So long, farewell to the streets.

-Slick Rick, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that this is really the case. You've seen both sides to the gang banging life. Some believe that it's best to get out before it's too late, what do you think? We'd like to believe that you had your common sense and range of emotions, way before you found the streets. The streets may have just enhanced it a little more.

Farewell Speech To Thug Life

All I want to know is that I am about to be eighteen in eighteen months.
Already been in juvie for the second time.
I already survived the last time.
I been here, but this time its rough
'cause it's a lot of people putting me down and it hurt to see
that staff or other members not doing any thing about it.
But this juvie, the land of hell.
I am a survivor, not a put down animal.
I got special talent that nobody got
an I ain't afraid to speak and you can't hurt my soul.
But you ain't gonna put my dream down.
You ain't no one so stop hating and be your own grown man
you ain't hurting me you hurting yourself by talking.
Stop hating, live your life to the fullest.
This is how a survivor in this horrendous lifestyle does it.
I do not want to be a thug no more I want to have a laid back life of success.

-Soul Survivor, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We happen to think you are incredibly brave! And we think you do have special talents that others don't know about. With your courage, we know you can get out of the thug life. It takes someone with a lot of courage, but we've seen you display that already. Keep your head up and know that there are people out there that want to help you move on. Good luck!

There's No Place Better . . .

I don't think forever is impossible
Because she is my pot of gold.
I got it bad for her you can say so
My friends can make jokes, but my feelings will not fade

So I pray
Hope we grow old one day
She says she loves me, and I love her too
I am not going to run away
I am going to stay

So I promise that
I may be the one to take her to the Bahamas and back
I realize that without her my skies will turn black
I love it when she puts her head on my chest and lets me rub her back

So I always think about me and her forever
Cause when me and her are together
Nothing else will matter
Cause together there's no place better.

-Marques, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Thinking of the times you have spent and want to spend with loved ones is a positive, uplifting pastime. Finding someone special to share your life with is like a valuable jewel. It takes time to understand and accept another person as a partner in our life. Once you have it, you want to take care of that relationship. How much time have you spent building a deep, meaningful, committed relationship? What are you contributing to the relationship that will sustain it...make it last? How can you begin today to pursue the life you write of in this piece?

Two Hours Of Freedom

If I had two hours of freedom I would go to the fair. But before that I would have to go get my lady or else I wouldn't stop hearing her complaints. Then we would pile up in her old Honda Civic and go to the fair.

I'd get on every ride because I got hookups like that and play every game I could, eat, and then go crusin' around just to make it back to Durango . But before I come back I gots to stop at Filibertos and get my Arizona burrito with a large horchata.

-Zacharias, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow Zach! You are a busy young man on the outs! Does your life consist of anything else besides fun, food and friends? What are your responsibilities? With freedom comes the responsibility to contribute....are you willing to be responsible? If you are able to find a balance between the fun and activities that build responsibility, you will be able to maintain your freedom and have years of freedom versus hours of freedom.

Fare Well

farewell sweet life of crime
for i have better things to do
with life's delicate time
a farewell speech to the streets
but how can i dare to part
with the truth of its heart
— wait … what streets?
i'm from white suburbia

-Esotoric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very funny, girl! How about a farewell to the street toward which your obsession and compulsion keep turning your feet?

Gloomy Truths

weariness of mind and soul
a grotesque disease grows
twisting paths and roads
nowhere left to go
cannot grasp reality
so we must stay within infinity
there's a dark humor to our lives
as if we were in some tragic melody
so where shall one turn
when death seems sweeter
where do we run
when fiction becomes fact
and still no one believes
full of thoughtless thoughts
and deadly wistful things
a state of mind so bright and intriguing
yet the soul that follows is bleak
never through with the gloomy truths
of our childhood lies

-Esoteric Rainbow, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The truth of lies represents the heart of fiction indeed. But it's no excuse to surrender to disease, or entertain self-destructive fantasies that lead through pain to delirious despondency. Let your mind and heart awake, and the misty gloom of diseased thought will cease deluding you. You deserve better and more. You deserve to survive this angst for sure and greet with happy surprise what life yet holds in store.

My Farwell Speech to the Turf

I miss you all a lot. I'll be back soon. Oakland, California, is my home, the only place where I know to go. My turf is where I had my real first love. Now I'm seeing him only when we go downtown to see Judge K. Now I'm saying, "Dang, isn't this crazy?

Well, what I'm really trying to say, is that I really miss my 'hood. All I can think about is, "If I would've stayed, I wouldn't be here, getting behind these doors listening to what other people tell me." You feel me? Will if I have another chance to start all over again and get my first love back? I will, but right now my life is messed up. They're trying to get me, to give me some more time.

But it's good though. I can get through it, if Lil' Man did. Well, I'm going to let you all go now. I'll write back soon. All right, Beat Within readers.

-Lil' Shawnee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's only natural to miss your neighborhood, and of course the boy who is still your first love. Your job is not only to get through this time but also to work to get your mind right — 'cause after your release, with or without your first love, you need to stay free. Do nothing to put your freedom at risk after your release, 'cause you don't need to keep doing this same old in the new facility.

Why Do People Go to Jail?

What's up Beat?

I just want to ask all the people that are locked up: Why do people go to jail?

Why would you want to spend your time in a small ass room, when people that don't even know you get to tell you what to do, when to eat, when to take a shower and when to go to sleep. Why would any human person want to live their life that way?

I just don't get it and I would hope somebody that is human would want to be free. I know I do, so stop all the dumb shhh and live the life you were supposed to live.

I don't know why I didn't, but my reason for doing what I did to get locked up was different than anything most people do to get put in jail. I had a different motive and a different purpose. I just got caught, so now I have to pay for it.

When I'm back on the streets and another chance comes up for me to have what I want, I can either go for it, or give my victim a pass. I'll let my heart decide on what I might do and how I should do it.

-Travelle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a good question, maybe the best question that anyone can act because it cuts to the heart of the pain at the center of every Beat reader's life. But maybe everyone feels like you do, that their reason for getting to jail is "special", or "different" What surprised us was that after you wrote the great description of how terrible jail life is, you still end up writing that you might well repeat the very actions that got you sent to jail in the first place!!!! So we have to ask you, young Travelle, after all you say here, how could you even CONSIDER doing what you did again, now that you know what the price is?

Pray To God: Let My Innocence Defend Me

I don't really know what to write about tonight, other than about my time in here and what I'm going to do when I get out of this place.

I can't stand this place! And I'm not supposed to be here — I'm innocent in my case! So I should be getting out soon. But my birthday is at the end of this month, and I just pray to God that I get out before then — and before they open the new hall so I don't have to go up there!

Well, anyway, when I do get out of this bee, I'm going to finish school and graduate like I was going to before I came in here. And I'm going to keep working, then go to college — and just make up for the time I've been in here. I plan to appreciate my freedom and enjoy everyday as if it were my last.

Pray to God. He can help you in your worst times. He did and does for me! I'm out. Stay up!

-Juan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sorry if we got your name wrong. Your signature was hard to read. Always print your name clearly because we clearly want to get it right. Well, here's hoping you're already out. Maybe you even came by the office to pick up this copy of The Beat. But if God is helping you, don't settle for being innocent of the charge — look at the behaviors that set you up to take this fall, despite the fact that you're innocent of the charge. To be honest, you sound like you have a clear plan for the future — do it!

Seeing My Family

The last time I felt really good was when I finally seen my family for the first time in many months. I felt really good, 'cause my family means more than anything to me 'cause they are the people that taught most of the things that I know right now.

I felt really good seeing my brother 'cause he just came back from Tonga 'cause he was messing up in Oakland. I felt really good 'cause I haven't seen him for three years and I missed him a lot and when he came back to Oakland I was hella happy 'cause I'm finally able to chill with him for the first time in a long time and I missed him hella much.

-Abo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now you know how much you love and miss your family, so it should be your mission to stay out of places like the system and do things that don't cause you to get in run-ins with the police. Is your brother also thinking of living a better life free of trouble? Hope so. What is your game plan upon touching down?

The Kingdon of Tonga

i'm from coconut trees
and beautiful seas
i'm from a land
that's scented by tropical leaves
and exotic trees
i'm from an independent country
that's ruled by a king
i'm from turquoise seas
where nature still sings
i'm from the land
where my father roamed
where freedom is lived
and not told
where a soul can live its life
to the fullest and grow old
i'm from a land
where we praise god
in a religious stature
where my people live in peace
and currency doesn't matter
where everyone is treated
like an award winning actor
i'm from a land
where the poor will be treated
without paying the doctor
where men are men
and women is treated proper
i'm from a land
where the night is filled with more
than ten million stars in the sky
and there's no reason for drugs 'cause
my island itself gives you a natural high
where the kids roam free
'cause everyone keeps a watchful eye
i'm from the land
where love is true
and where happiness lies
where my people united
as a nation of one-and-all rise
a lot of people don't know where in from
but when they ask
i tell 'em — paradise!
MATE MA'A TONGA

-Kaho, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a beautiful description of the country of your country of origin! But we wonder if that's a childhood memory. We've heard when young Tongan Americans go back that they get treated like outcasts. Is that true? When you receive this issue wherever you may now be, will you answer this question: Is the above a nostalgic dream or reality?

Buzzer Beater

One night at Long Beach Poly, we had a big game. It was a long night. We were down the whole game, and there were four minutes left to play. The score was tied at 65 each.

We were working hard! We played hard. With a minute and twenty-one seconds to go, we were down one point, 72-73, and my best friend came up the court and made a three! Then they made one, too!

And now there were only three seconds left in the game, and somebody on our team put up a shot, but it missed — and I grabbed the rebound and put it back up. We won! 77-76! And I had fifteen points in that game.

-Bob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hope "Bob" doesn't mean "boy outta Berkeley". Oh well, great sports story! There's nothing like the thrill of putting in the winning basket at the buzzer — and it counts! Good game, good story. Now bring that same intensity to outgrowing your criminal propensity, so you can live safe, happy and free.

My Block

What's up with it Beat? It's ya boy young Chino from Hayward. Today I'm gonna talk about my block where I eat and where I call home. Just being out there running around wit' the homies doing hot shhh, makes me feel good.

Tell you the truth, soon as I get released from here first thing I'm gonna do is hit the block. I don't know about you, but I ain't got nothing else. No family, nowhere to go home to. The only thing I got is my block. Well that's it for now. I'ma cut this loose.

-Young Chino, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Young Chino, we understand why you want to hit the block if you feel like that's the only thing you know. And we're so sorry that you don't have a family to trust and rely on. This is a very unfair world we live in. Have you ever considered asking for help from a counselor in the hall that you like or trust? You could ask how to get set up in a program where they would provide housing, job training, they would even help you get your high school diploma. There are service out there for kids like you. Keep your eye out in upcoming issues of The Beat, where we'll put a list of services and phone numbers that you can call.

The Last Time You Felt Really Good

The last time I felt good was about last week when I had a T-R (Temporary Release), my mom came and got me so I can go to my counseling classes. It felt so good just to be outside in the fresh air and to be free.

After that we went to Guadalajara (Tacqueria). My mom bought me that good-ol'-super burrito. I had fun being there too, because I seen these two girls that be in my apartments. I got to talk to them for twenty-minutes and my burrito was done.

My mom and left to go home, so I can take a shower. On the way, I finished my burrito and I felt even better when I finished it. I felt spectacular just to take a long shower by myself again.

Then it was 7:00 and I had to come back to 150 aka Alameda Juvenile at 7:30. I was really ticked off. I'm cutting back on profanity.

When I got here all that positive feeling left, but now I should get out tomorrow. When I get out I'm gonna be on E-M, but I'm gonna get a get probably with The Beat Within. I'll talk to when I'm working.

-Dominic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Excellent on topic piece Dominic! You give us readers a taste of your T-R and what made you feel good, to what made you angry, returning to juvenile. Well, the good thing is you will be getting another chance at freedom, and all we can say is do not blow it, use your time wisely and stick to people who want to see what is best for you! Give us a call when you get out!!

My Family

I am thinking about my family.
Even though I have court soon, and might get out,
I still miss them, because I realize that no one should be without their family. Hopefully, I will get out and start over,
so I won't have to come back here.
But the time here has helped me remember what I did wrong.
Maybe it helps everyone to be locked up for a little while.
But instead of keeping us minors locked up in here for a long time,
they should just warn us and keep us here for a short time. We get it. We won't do it again. Our brains are not fully developed yet. We are barely adults.

-Youngster, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We wish you were right. We wish that just a short stay would be all the warning a young person needed. But sometimes, a stay in juvy doesn't seem to put a dent in the behaviors of some young folks. We trust it will in yours, and we wish you good luck.

What's On My Mind

The first thing that goes through my mind when I wake up is: just another day.

Since seventh grade, I've pretty much been going through the motions. Stoned, high, or drunk, I've stumbled through life not knowing what to do next.

I've followed the actions of my peers, but at the same time lashed out to convince myself I was a leader, not a follower – that I was different.

Now I find myself sitting in juvy – the last place in the world I want to be.

I've been making excuses my whole life. My mom's fault, my dad's fault, my coaches. I'm not saying they made things easier for me, but they didn't mess things up for me. No, that was my doing, and it's going to have to be my doing to fix things up. The only problem is that now a bunch of other people are running my life. But I can't blame them, for once again, it was my fault.

Before I eventually fall asleep, I think about everyone I've hurt, or helped to hurt, and about everything I've done wrong. Normally, I don't get more than four hours of sleep a night, unless I'm f'd up on something.

-A new day, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Very well written, A new day. So, you say you find yourself sitting in juvy. Well, we hope you do "find yourself" while you're sitting here. You sound to us like a perfectionist, of sorts. That is, you're rarely satisfied unless you've excelled at what ever you take on. But we get the feeling that your current project is dumping on yourself. We aren't saying you shouldn't take an inventory of where you've messed up. That's important. But not to the extent that it sucks all the energy out of you. Guilt is useful in carefully measured doses. But you need to save most of your energy for doing the kinds of things that will contribute to your happiness and to the happiness of those you care about. Instead of reiterating your failures for hours and hours every night, try making a list of the good things you'd like to do, for yourself, and for the people you care about. For that matter, it wouldn't hurt to do at least one nice thing for a stranger, every day. So, start by redirecting your thoughts to good things, and putting your energy where it will do you the most good. You're a smart guy, but you've made a habit of beating yourself up, mentally and emotionally. So stop, already.

To My Baby Girl Karla

Baby girl I miss you and I can't wait till I see you again.
I wanna hold you and kiss you and be with you all day.
Can't wait till I get out and get to love you.
Every time I think of you it makes me wanna cry
'cause I miss you so much baby.
I just want to let you know that I really really love you
I hope you can forgive me for not being out there with you
on the outs. When I get out I'm going to change for you
I don't wanna be in jail or prison instead of being with you.

-Derty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: To be away from those you love is very hard. What have you learned from the situation you're in? What must you do to remain free and with the one(s) you love? If your girl is the inspiration to change for the better, beautiful! Keep us posted.

Finally

Four years alone in my little shell, gone from my family, leaving them scared, in the dark, worried about where I am, leaving them to grieve whether I'm dead or alive.

Four years alone in my little shell, living life too fast doing my own thing, being grown, when I am really just a kid, really trying to find my way out of that shell, back to my mom, and all it took was for someone to step in, and break open my shell, now I'm back with my family. Finally.

-Tajanik, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have you been able to confide your feelings with someone? Who is that special someone that was able to break through your shell? What makes up your shell? Is it because you're shy and low key? Is it because of an experience you've went through? How does it feel being back with family? Have you've been able to share your journey with them? Do you see yourself leaving them again or was that experience enough?

Calling My Brother In Heaven

I think I would call and ask for my brother. I would ask my brother what kind of things he would like. My brother would be 20 years old, He would be the middle child, the second oldest. Sometimes many questions come to my head, but I can't quite think of the perfect question.

I believe I would have an extremely long conversation with him. I would want to know what color would be his favorite, even his favorite food, etc. I would ask his opinions on the things that affected my family. I would want to ask him what he was like because he had passed away before I could even remember. I would like to know what his schedule was like, I would ask what he liked to do.

I always wanted to know how my parents were like before I was born through my brother's eyes. I think I would tell him a bit about me and the things I liked and disliked. I would tell him my own opinions and feelings about certain things. I would share with him how our parents were after he passed away.

This would be one of those phone calls I would not like to hang up. Also, I would do everything possible to have an extra minute, even an extra second to have an extra second to learn about my older brother. Just hearing his voice would definitely give me questions that I would ask, and if I was forced to hang up, I wouldn't say "good-bye" because I know that I would see him again one day.

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: This would be one long phone call! Did you learn anything about your brother from your family? How did he die? Do you know if you are anything like him? Personality? Looks? Did you know that the word "good-bye" is an abbreviated form of an old greeting, "God be with you." So there would be no need to say it, since it's already happened!

My Other Home

I have grown up living with my mom for most of my life. Unfortunately, she met the wrong man and everything changed. My place I called home wasn't my only home.

When I couldn't go to my best friends house anymore or go to my own home, the streets became my second home. I would walk the streets of San Francisco for days. I was there so often the homeless people started becoming my best friends. I felt like I could be myself and start over when I was homeless. I would sleep at parks, the beach, sometimes I just lay right on the sidewalk.

It was sometimes hard but I always felt like it was better than my home with my mother. The people around me were so carefree and so was my lifestyle. I began to lose myself in the rush of not knowing what was going to happen next; living on the edge. I almost felt safer there than anywhere else.

I now have a second home with a man I love, but the streets will always be my home away from home.

-Skatergurl

From The Beat: Your home should be safer than the streets, Skategurl. However safe you feel there, it really is not safe just to roam the streets and sleep in parks. It's tragic that your mother's boyfriend has made your own home an unsafe or uncomfortable place to be, but it is still your home. At least there you are safer and warmer than the cold, cold streets. Or are you?

Home Away From Home

It would be my girl house, 'cause every time I feel like doing something I drive to her and kick it wit' her until da mom come back from work. Sometimes I stay in the room until she goes to work 'cause she don't like me 'cause I don't say hi to her.

-Al

From The Beat: So, you go and eat up this woman's food and take comfort in her house, but you don't talk to her? What's that all about? Maybe if you want her mother to like you, you should be respectful and polite, and just say hello.

One Phone Call

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to God and ask him why us as human beings sometimes do some really stupid things. Like start wars, build systems in which the minorities are the victims of globalization, put down other races that are not our own. The same government we live in does this to us. So do teachers, staff, probation officers, judges.

Why do we live in a world where, wherever you go, you have to prove you're better than someone else by putting them down? Everyone does this — me, you, they, them. Yet we still live in denial.

I would like to ask God why there are epidemics. Why do people front and try to be someone they're not, why can't they just be themselves? Why? Do we live in a world of lies and then become that same lie we swore to destroy!?

-Juan

From The Beat: If God answered your question by telling you that He gave each of us a mind to judge for ourselves what decisions we want to make in life (that we're not just pre-programmed robots with every move known ahead of time), how would that information affect you? Would it make you change anything about how you live your life? We would like to know the answers to all your questions, too, because sometimes it seems like the brain God gave us might have been a mistake, since we don't seem to know how to use it for the benefit of all of us. This is an extremely well-written and very thoughtful piece. Thank you.

My Imaginary Home Away From Home

My home away from home would be one like no other, a mirage to some, a fantasy to others. No worries, no troubles. It's a place where I could go to think. It's free of haters. It has plenty of time for me to chill. I could bounce off the walls, run around yelling enjoying the pleasures of life. It would make others want to stay forever sober away from sin and frustration. Drugs would be the last of my worries.

It is a place easy to go to but hard to find. Things could change easily, like imagination. I enter this false world calling it a home away from home. This place protects you from disruption through maturity and meditation. This place can be achieved. It's as easy as winning a game from childhood. I can only describe this place from memory and imagination.

-Young Bugs

From The Beat: Hey, if you ever find a place like this, let us know! We wouldn't mind having a second home like that. We could all chill and bounce off walls. Seriously, though, this shows a very creative, very rich, very fertile mind. You could take this small description and turn it into a complete book-length fantasy. All you have to do is fill it with real characters and describe how they would interact in this place that could be called Nirvana (you might have to look it up...)

My Phone Call To Heave

One phone call, who would I call? I would call my cousin Lursa, who, RIP, died on Thanksgiving in 2005. I would ask her why and how she died, who killed her? And why did she have to leave everyone.

Her personality will always be remembered. Why someone would pass the limit of jealousy and take someone's life away is just heck a sorry, But whatever goes around comes back around, que no?

Wishin' an' reminiscin' you were still here, brings back a tear. But someday we'll be together again, so I don't trip. In loving memory of Luisa Garcia. RIP Nov.2005, love you prima.

-Lil' L

From The Beat: We hate reading one tragic story of untimely death after another. It shouldn't be this way. Why was someone so jealous of Luisa? What would you say to whoever took her from you? Every death brings the same kind of tears you are shedding to whoever that person left behind, but someone, most people don't seem to care about the death of others unless they are somehow connected. Do you think there will ever be a time when we see how much we all have in common, and feel the loss of every human death?

Home Away Form Home

My home away from home is my girlfriend's house, because if I needed some place to go it would always be there. I felt care because I was with her. And her parents would treat me like a son. That would be the only place I would go, I'd wake up in the morning to go to school, then her house until 10 at least, then go home and sleep. It was better there because I could talk to everyone.

-Israel

From The Beat: That does truly sound like a second home. What was going on at your own house that made you look for another place where you could feel safe and cared for? Why couldn't you talk to everyone at your house?

Drive-By

Kids hanging out at the club, some playing ball. A car pulls up and waits. No one realizes it will change them all.

Kids laughing on the playground, some swimming in the pool. The people in the car wait, 'till the top of the hour, hoping to be cool.

More people enter the park. It is now a minute to the hour. They see the car.

The clock strikes the hour, gunshots are heard all over town. They came from the car and people are down.

The car speeds off leaving the dead and scared. One man has his face shot up, the other has his back shot, and the other's bullet-ridden chest is half-bared.

The police quickly respond to phone calls and catch up to the car. The men try to escape but are overwhelmed and put behind bars.

Will the city ever be the same? Especially the community by the park? I guess this shows life is nothing but a game and those who lose their life lose the game.

-Nick

From The Beat: If losing one's life means losing the game, then all of us will be losers. We think it's how you live your life that determines if you're a winner or loser. It's the life style some choose to live that will determine if they will win or lose. However, what you describe here is an ongoing tragedy that doesn't seem to have any end in sight.

Calling Heaven

If there were one person whom I can call in Heaven, it would by my uncle. He is my grandfather's little brother, but the middle child out of ten siblings. Ever since I can remember, he always showed me and those around me that I possessed something different. After his long days at work he would see me, always in my happy-go-lucky attitude, and forget about his stress and worries.

When my parents started off here, new to his country, he gave my father money, and never once asked for it back. My uncle saw the best in everyone, especially me. He said often, although I was merely five years old, he told me that he saw limitless potential in my eyes. He passed away when I was nine, and I was destroyed when I heard, but the family would often come to me and get cheered up, smile, and be relieved of their stress, because they would all see a little of him in me. It might be one of those things that you yourself aren't able to see, and I was content on just knowing I wanted to see it too.

Well, I went from happy-go-lucky to angry. Some may contest that I am the birth of their stress, pain, and agony. If I could talk to my uncle, I would tell him I'm sorry for what I've done and am doing. It has taken years of being in the system and being in trouble to realize the one thing anyone has ever said to me that I will never forget, the epitome of my happiness, is through self realization. Which means if you cannot right the wrong, realize the wrong you have committed, That way you can never make that mistake again, and maybe prevent someone from making that same one. For that I want to tell him thank you.

-Zameer

From The Beat: Your uncle — actually, your great uncle — must have been an extraordinary man. He not only saw your limitless potential, he had the heart to tell you what he saw. Is his passing what created some of the anger in you? How have you dealt with this anger. What are your plans for making your uncle (and yourself) proud of you? If you live your life by the principles you describe here, especially learning from past mistakes in order to avoid future ones, we think you'll achieve that potential your uncle saw in you so long ago. This is a wonderfully written and heartfelt tribute to your uncle, and we appreciate it.

Sad

Well, I didn't know about the shooting because I wasn't there but I think that the person did something or selling things or drugs to the wrong person. But I think that those kids shouldn't get shot.

-Joshua

From The Beat: We agree. That's one of the reasons why we hate guns so much, because they don't care who gets killed. The bullet goes where it's pointed and it hits something at the other end. Could be a child. Could be an old woman. Could be you...

Home Away From Home

Getting up in the morning
In a different household
It's warm it ain't really cold.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Since you didn't put your name on your piece, we don't know who we're responding to. But whoever you are, we wish you had a few more details in this piece. Whose household are you talking about getting up in?

Just Another Day

Heavy, tired and swollen,
My babies have dropped
They're almost here
Scared and yet happy
I take it day by day
I'll be there
When they're born
Disgraced and lost
My hope is burned out
The candle is almost out
But not yet
Time will pass
And I'll be gone
Like the Phantom of the Opera

-Lukee

From The Beat: Actually, time will pass for all of us, and we'll all be gone sooner or later. But with kids about to enter your life, we sure hope it is later rather than sooner. Much, much later.

My Home Away From Home

My home away from home has always been my best friend's house. No matter what the situation is, what time it is or what condition I'm in, she always opened her door to me. When I was homeless, she would always tell me I could come over whenever necessary. I'd go and eat, sleep, shower or just go to have some time with just me and her.

I love my best friend with all my heart. She's saved my life many times, though she doesn't know it. There were many times I'd catch the bus from South City to San Mateo in the middle of the night just to be able to be with her because she made me feel safe. Her presence and her home made me feel at ease when I felt like my heart was going to burst. I love you, foo'!

-Bubbles

From The Beat: A true friend — who this person obviously is — is hard to find. Cherish this friendship. Tell her just how grateful you are for all the things she has done for you. How can she help to keep you free as well as safe?

One Phone Call

If I had one phone call to Heaven, I would ask to speak to God. I would ask Him about our world and how all living things were made. I would also ask him how it is up there in Heaven.

-Eduardo

From The Beat: What else would you want to ask God? Would you want to ask him about your future? What would you do if God also wanted to talk to you about the way you've been living, and the way He wants you to live?

My Second Home

My second home is my patna's house. We treat each other like brothers. It's like my house because they let me do whatever I want and let me sleep over their house, and we be blowing hella blunts. And his parents are cool, and throw parties.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Besides partying and smoking blunts, do you do anything that might help you move forward in life? Do you study together? Read books? Partying is great, but there's a whole lot more to life than that.

To Change

I love you, mija (my girl). Te prometo quererte todos los días de mi vida (I promise to love you every single day of my life). Mija, quisiera verte para poder besarte o abrazarte con estos cálidos brazos para que no sientas frío (Girl, I would love to see you so I could kiss you or hug you with these warm arms so you don't feel cold). Te prometo cambiar cuando salga de aqui (I promise you that I will change when I get out of here) 'cause I love you mija with all my heart. I promise to you that I want to change my life.

I just found out that being on the streets, I won't win nothing. The only thing that I get you is to lose your family, girlfriend, and friends of your life. I love you, mija, and I miss you. You are my everything, mija. Don't forget that I love you, mija.

-Roylan, Marin

From The Beat: We hope you never forget what the streets bring to people's lives. We hope you stay out of here to be with the people you deserve to be with. One more thing: Next time, try to send this love letter straight to her. Our purpose is more than just delivering a love poem. See ya'!

Fue Un Domingo

La última vez que me senti bien. Fue un domingo, cuando estaba tomando con unas rucas en su casa y con su mama y con unos homies.

Esa fue mi vez que me senti bien, pero esta vez estabamos tomando, fumando y peliando entre nosotros. Despues nos fuímos a comprar más cervezas para seguir la fiesta y luego a fumar y a comprar.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que pudistes haberla pasado mejor sin tener que estar tomando, fumando o usando la violencia? Hay diferente formas como pasarsela bien, esperamos que busques una de esas maneras para que no termines en lugares como esto. Toma este consejo.

It Was A Sunday

The last time that I felt good was a Sunday, when I was drinking with some females in their house, with the mother of the girl's house, and with some homies.

That was my time when I felt good, but this time we were drinking, smoking, and fighting amongst ourselves. Then, we went to go buy more beers to continue the party and then smoke and to smoke.

-Roylan, Marin

From The Beat: Do you believe that you could have had a better time without having to be drinking, smoking, or using violence? There are different ways on how to have a good time. We hope you seek one of those ways so you don't end up in places like this one. Take these words of advice.

La Buena Educación

Yo soy de Mexico City de un barrio no muy pobre ni muy rico. Mi barrio no es como cualquier otro. Ahí uno encuentra lo que queire. Hay cosas buenas como la escuela, educación y buenas influencias. Lo malo es que existe la droga por todos lados.

Si no te vuelves un buen estudiante, te volveras un ratero y un mafioso. Yo nunca fui bueno en la escela, pero si tengo una buena educación. Mi vida ha sido más cayejera.

Creo que si no hubieran fronteras en otros paises, no sería mal porque toda la gente podía viajar de un lado a otro sin que lo persiga la policia. Yo creo que esto se llama descriminación que no permita que la gente vayan de una ciudad a otra.

Si hubiera solo un presidente o un rey, fuera distinto. A lo mejor todavía hubiese esclavos o fuera más horrible.

From The Beat: La educación es la llave más amaestrada que habre muchas puertas en la vida. Sin una educación es dificil superar. ¿Dinos y tú estas haciendo algo para superar? ¿Qué? Desafortunadamente todos los paises tienen sus reglas y formas. A lo mejor las cosas fuera diferente o iguales. ¿Que sabemos?

The Good Education

I am from Mexico City, from a 'hood, not very poor, nor very rich. My 'hood is not like any other. There, one finds whatever one wants. There are good things like school, education, and good influences. The bad is that drugs exist everywhere.

If you don't become a good student, you will become a pickpocket and a Mafioso. I was never good in school, but I do have good education. My life has been more in the streets.

I believe that if there were no borders in other countries, it would not be bad because everyone would be able to travel from one place to another without having the police following you. I believe that this is called "discrimination" that doesn't allow people go from one city to another.

If there were only one president or a king, it would different. Maybe slaves would still exist or it would be more horrible.

-Francisco U5

From The Beat: Education is the key to higher learning that opens more doors in life. Without an education, it is difficult to move up. Tell us: Are you doing something to move up? What? Unfortunately, every country has its own rules and ways. What? Unfortunately, all the countries have their rules and ways. Maybe things would be different or the same. What do we know?

Pensamientos Felices

En el mundo existen muchas cosas que me hacen sonreir, desde un pensamiento hasta un amor. La esperanza de salir de aqui en este 28 de Febrero, me da mucha felicidad pero a la misma vez tengo miedo de la otra opción que es estar más tiempo.

En este momento, estoy enamorado de una persona muy importante y linda para mí. Esto es lo que me da fuerzas para esforzarme y luchar día tras día. Los recuerdo de ella junto a mí son muchos. Desde hace unos meses que llebo en este lugar y no puedo dejar de pensar en ella.

Pues mi novia y mi mama viven diariamente en mi mente. Yo sé que me porte mál con ellas dos y las trate como a cualquier persona desperdiciando tiempo, cariño y mucho amor.

Este tiempo aqui adentro me ha hecho reflecionar y estoy seguro que cuando salga voy a cambiar. Lo prometo por estas dos mujeres que amo con todo mi corazón.

From The Beat: Esperamos que estas dos personas te sigan dando la fuerza para seguir adelante y que sean la fuerza que necesitas para hacerlas feliz y parar de sufrir. ¿Se nota que tienes lo que necesitas para seguir adelante, que más estas buscando en la vida? Es hora de demostrar lo que realmente estas pensando hacer. No dejes que esto solo sean palabras que el viento se llebara.

Happy Thoughts

A lot of things exist in the world that makes me smile, from a thought to a girlfriend. The hope of getting out of here this 28th of February gives me lots of happiness, but at the same time, I am scared of the other option which is being in here for more time.

At this moment, I am in love with a very important, and beautiful, person, for me. This is what gives me the strength to go all-out and fight day after day. The memories of her next to me are many. I've been in this place for some months and I can't stop thinking about her.

Well, my girlfriend and my mother live daily in my mind. I know that I behaved badly with them and I treated them like any other person wasting time, affection, and lots of love.

This time in here has made me reflect and I am positive that when I get out of here, I am going to change. I promise for these two women that I love with all my heart.

-Rangel, San Mateo

From The Beat: We hope that these two people continue to give you the strength to strive forward, and they are the strength that you need to make them happy and stop suffering. We can tell from your piece that you have what you need to come out ahead. What else are you looking for in life? It is time for you to demonstrate what you are truly thinking about doing. Don't just let these be words in the wind.

Mis Pensamientos En Los Temas

Yo soy un creyente de Dios. Me gusta ir a la iglesia Cristiana desde que era niño. Siempre mis padres me llebaban y cuando ellos no podían ir, siempre me ponía a llorar y les decía que yo quería ir a la iglesia. Ellos por cosas de trabajo o por estar cansado se tomaban un día y no iban. Era muy triste para mí. Así creci y hasta estos momentos, siempre me gusta la palabra de Dios.

En mi imaginación, si nuestros paises no tubieran fronteras, supongo que solo hubiera un presidente. Creo que no pudiera mantener en orden a tanta gente ladrones. Creo que fuera una destrucción.

Todos las mañantas siempre me dispierto dandole gracias a Dios por darme un día más de vida. Luego pienso en mi familia en como estaran, si estaran enfermos. Me pongo a pensar muchas cosas. Le pido a Dios que me de fuerzas para soportar estar aqui. Eso es lo que yo hago cuando apenas me lebanto todas las mañanas.

From The Beat: Ser creyente de Dios es un buen camino. ¿Si eres creyente, que te trajo a estos lados? ¿Has podido pensar en los errores que has cometido, los cuales te han traído a este lugar? Esperemos que Dios te de la fueras que necesitas para cambiar tu forma de pensar y que busques el buen camino como El lo pide. ¿Crees que puedas?

My Thoughts On The Topics

I am a believer in God. I have liked going to the Christian church since I was little. My parents always took me and when they couldn't go, I would always start to cry and I would tell them that I wanted to go to church. They, because of work, or being tired, would take the day off and they wouldn't take me. It was very sad to me. That's how I grew up and till these moments, I always like the word of God.

In my imagination, if our countries didn't have any borders, I suppose there would only be one president. I don't believe that the president would not be able to keep in order so many thieves. I believe that it would a disaster.

Every morning, I always wake up giving thanks to God for giving me one more day of life. Then, I think about my family and how they are doing, like if they are sick. I start to think about a lot of things. I beg God to give me the strength to withstand being in here. That is what I do when I barely wake up in the mornings.

-Edward,U5

From The Beat: Being a believer in God is a good path. If you are a believer, what brought you to these parts? Have you been able to think about the errors that you have made; the ones that have brought you to this place? We hope that God gives you the strength that you need to change your way of thinking and that you find the good path like how He asks. Do you believe that you can?

God's Will . . .

God sent you to me from straight up above,
'Cause he wanted me to give you much care and love.
I told you I'll be with you 'till beginning 'till end,
And when I told you this I felt like Usher saying I'll be your lover and friend.
I made promises to you that I'll always keep
But if I don't fulfill your wishes dig me a grave six feet deep.
If you need me call me I'll be there,
I'll be there in a hurry to show how much I care.

-Sanchez

From The Beat: We usually focus on and spend time doing the things and being with the people we love the most. Where have you spent your time and where do you plan to spend your time? It sounds as if you have a special love for someone. Does she feel the same for you? Will she remain in a relationship with you if you are in and out of lockup or live a life outside the law?

Do My Best

This time I wish to do my best with the people that have helped themselves to better overcome from the streets and to come home for success in life, to become something in life and to help better my family, to get them out of the streets and to help them make the right choices in life.

If I was locked down in jail, people would probably look at me in a certain way. How did I get in here? For what reason? Then I would have a bad reputation because I could have done better. And then what would I have done for the people that love me? The streets would not care about me and love me because of my mistakes in life.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: You got one thing right – the streets will not love you. The streets are a hard place and they will eat you up and spit you out. The longer you're on the streets, the harder life will become. The sooner you can find a way out of the streets, the less chance you have of really messing things up.

To Lil' Sammy

From The Beat: It's not a question of all talk and no action, but stepping away from negative distraction of either kind. Don't let them mess with your mind!

Step Up!

What's up with it Beat? It's your boy Lil' Juanito from Oakland. I hope that you could stand up and face the world and do what you do but if you don't have nothing to do than you won't when you grow up.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Then you won't be able to face the world when you grow up? Is that what you mean. If it is, then you're right. If you want to face the world, you have to change your life so you're not doing things that keep you locked up and hidden away from the world.

My Farewell To The Streets

My farewell speech to the streets is that I'll be back pretty soon but not too soon because when I get out I'm not going straight to the hood. I gotta go handle some positive stuff first and I might not look back.

If I do decide to go to the hood I ain't gone do the stuff I use to do. I'm just gone chill and see what's good with everybody. That's really about it.

-Lil' Quise

From The Beat: Why is this time different? And how are you going to go back to the same place but be different? We're not saying it's not possible; we just want to know what the plan is when your homies tempt you with all you bad old ways and when you say no, they call you a sissy (or whatever they would say)? What's the plan then?

My World

this goes out to them everyday hustlas, everyday ballas
getting money at the price of ninjas gettin' talla
mo' money, mo money, i need mine
i'm'a hustla and ya know i stay on the grind
now oakland stand up, san francisco stand up
if y'a big time hustla, put ya hands up
what we won't do for the green
we'll try everything
but don't give a what in our world
we only knew the green is gold
and we all do it too
to all the ballas get money
boys, girls, e'rythang, you know.

-Turquoise

From The Beat: It's not even funny when somebody in our 'zine writes how they all about the money and gettin' that green! Why? 'Cause it can't be denied where you're at, trading your freedom for a dream that fast money will get you everything you want, when in reality it just gets you locked up like you the system's punk. You're not on the grind when you're doing time, except maybe in your ghetto fantasy mind that has you acting blind and coming back here again and again to do more time!

No Life Behind Bars

I don't want to have a life behind bars because it's money in the streets.
I don't want to live behind bars because I am bringing life into the world.
I don't want to live behind bars because I don't want to be remembered as a jail bird.

-Lil' Mainy

From The Beat: There are many, many reasons not to live a life behind bars. These are only a few. But you shouldn't worry about how people remember you. By definition, it means you're not even around to know about it. You should worry about how people feel about you now – and maybe also how you feel about yourself.

Growing Old Behind Bars

You know me, if it came down to being old behind bars I ain't going out in a drought. I'm gone shank me a couple of people. Forget that! If I go down, somebody else got a go with me.

It wouldn't be right if you die slowly behind bars. That world would be so much pain that you wouldn't care for anything but to just hurry up and die and get it over with. The last time I felt really good was when I was in school and I wasn't on probation or nothing. When I got a three-point-oh grade point average and my mom and grandma were really happy.

-Takari

From The Beat: Wow, those are some harsh words and thoughts from such a young soul. We don't know what happened in your life that you would shank other people just so you wouldn't go down alone, but that is a ruthless and a-moral way to see the world. We hope you spend some time reflecting on the last time you were happy and how you got so far away from that. We would like to believe there is good in all of us, it just gets messed up by all sorts of things. Now it's up to you to find it again and make your mom and grandma proud for the rest of your life.

My Farewell Speech

I'll be back soon, don't trip. I just got a dirty. I just took a hit. Don't worry about me. I'll be just fine. Just smoke a blunt and remember those times. You will see me in school you'll see me in class. But I'll be on E.M, but I'll be back just wait.

-Dirty test

From The Beat: How many hits have you taken? How many times will you come back? How many times wil you be able to smoke a blunt and remember before you're facing something a lot longer than a stint in juvie?

Scared Me to Death

Dizzy: Hey, Dani, how you doing? You seem kind of excited or something.
Dani: Oh, it's nothing. Well, really I just went to see a nine millimeter gun. You know, I never held the gun in my life.
Dizzy: Why are you so interested in guns? But since you are interested, would you care to join me for a moment back in my hotel room? I have something to show that I'm sure will interest you.
Dani: Sure! (They go to Diz's room.) Oh, wow! Hey, it's a real gun! where'd you get that?
Dizzy: Nowhere. It doesn't matter. So anyway, don't mind me. While I'm here, I'm going to shower. A'ight? (Goes into the shower in the bathroom and starts the water.)
Dani: (Playing with the gun wildly, like it's a toy, and talking loudly to herself like a child at play:) Dude! You' under arrest! Don't move or I will shoot you! (Then the gun accidentally goes off and the bullet smashes through the shower window, shattering the glass.)
Dizzy: Jesus Virgin Mary!
Dani: Oh! My bad! I didn't know it's loaded. (She puts on a good act of apologizing.)(Shiver and almost heart attack)
Dizzy: (Shivering and holding his chest as if he'd just had a heart attack:) No more playing toy gun! (He takes the gun from her.) Now get out of here. I got to attend to business. [The End.]

-Dizzy Bird

From The Beat: Insofar as guns are nothing to play with, this is a good and sobering story. But why would "Dizzy" indulge such a childish desire as to see and hold a gun. In fact, why is Dizzy doing any sort of "business" with a gun? Why do you want to represent yourself as a gun-toting gangster when you need to be focusing and changing your life.

Placement

What's up Beat Within? This your boy Lil' Joker. First of all, I just want to stay up, but yeah, I'm back again. They tryin' to put me in a placement again, but I'm tryin' to go to camp, you feel me. I was already in a group home.

For all locked up, if the judge or PO tries put you in a placement, you should go, 'cause the halls are shady. So if they wont let you out, ask for a placement. Well I'm out.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: We're sure the readers appreciate your advice and concern. Now if only you could look out for yourself like that on the outs!

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good is when my grandpa was alive. You know, that man that was my dog. I love that ninja. We used to talk about so much. Even though my grandpa was old he knew where I was coming from, you know. Like the way I talked and he understood the gang talk.

-Dasion

From The Beat: Your Grandpa sounds like a great guy who went out of his way to connect wth his grandson who he loved very much. How do you think your grandpa, who went through the civil rights era when blacks got the vote and fought against segregation, would feel about you calling him the N word? Would he care? How did your grandpa feel about you being caught up in a gang? Was he proud of you for that?

Being Young

When I was young. I used to do a whole lot of things but one day I popped and got drunk and then got my nose dirty. And then since then I been going dumb.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Yeah, that sounds about right to us. DUMB!

A Brief Farewell To The Streets

To all my homies from my block, just know that I'm going to be back with y'all soon enough to keep the block safe. Keep the game goin', 'cause I'm gonna join in with y'all soon.

-Edwin

From The Beat: You can't keep the block safe. Carry heat and you bring heat your way. Funk and you bring funk to your block another day. Going back to your crew on the block means you'll be coming back here like the system's knock!

What Does The Beat Know About Gumby?

what do y'all know about young gumbalassi
a young vato on the block sipping on carlo-rossi
with the window rolled down, index finger itchin'
got me paranoid on the block, feeling like that ninja
yeah i'm the shhh — i'm lightweight godzilla
so i'm a gangsta for realah
like jim jones balling, i got scrilla
in my hood it's warfare
real-life guerilla on the block we don't play
but the game is thick
so believe when i'm saying this
i'm not playing mind tricks
not the silly rabbit
she's nothing to me
you really want it, you could have it
but bring me back my cheese
in my hand i gotta grab it

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: If you're literally talking about pimping some girl, then you need to rethink your world from top to bottom, 'cause you're gonna get stopped, caught up and locked in a cell rotten — 'cause what goes down comes round, whether it's a bullet flying toward your crown or spending more time locked down. Your mind is playing tricks on you if you can't see it's time that you and the street life be through with each other, or Gumby's mother will end up sobbing while he's lay under the ground or down by law. Grab yourself a job and get paid legally — or you'll never stay safe and free.

My Thoughts

It's always a ninja out here that wanna throw salt in somebody's game! For example, I got a brah that hit for a couple racks! His squad was shining on deuces, eating right! Now everywhere I go, it's always one of them haters cooking something up in the kitchen; ninjas talking 'bout how they gon' strip him and such and such! Why you gotta bring him down? Why you can't crawl up there with him? The reason for that is somewhat similar to the reason why I got shot.

It was some fonk, but I got on it and came up! At first we had squashed it, but when I started shining, they wanted to hate and try to take me out of the game! But I learned my lesson — don't flaunt what you got! 'Cause if they ain't eating, they gon' try to take what's on your plate and leave you the crumbs! Anybody need me to break that down? I'm pretty sure you get the picture!

-Domo

From The Beat: Everybody gets the picture, but you'll find that even keeping a low profile won't solve the essentially scandalous nature of the game. You're still blaming the player and not the game; and until you're ready to change your game, you'll still feel the pain, whether it's a bullet or a jail cell. Get out the game altogether if you really want to do better!

Soon We Will Post Again

Well to all my partners in Berkeley, I'm locked up for the minute, but in about a week we'll be posted on the block again.

I been cool up in here, but I miss my homies an the block and my family, but things really changed from the past experience with all in the hood because after getting popped in by the other city, I'm trying to take it easy, but until then soon we'll post again.

-Lil' Crybaby

From The Beat: Posting with the homies is not a good sign. We'll either see you locked up or given what you write a victim to the bloodshed. Smarten up! Leave the block and the homies, and get it right with school, a legit job, and your family!

Trying To Stop

I'm tryin' to stop mobbin', but I can't — 'cause everybody keep tryin'a bring me back! But I'm not going to, 'cause I already got my dough.

So I'm leavin' my block, not even thinking of it — just thinking ahead! So I'm going to school, tryin'a make some honest bread, not shake my dreads getting high but going school, just tryin'a get by, tryin'a stay off that before I start back to getting high!

So now I'm gonna be off to the house to be with my fam', my kid, my baby'mama, my mama and my gram'. That's why when I get on the outs, I'm go' do right! And that's all for now — goodbye.

-Blair

From The Beat: Strange how you start off saying you can't quit mobbing, and then you go on to say that's exactly what you plan to do. Maybe you mean in the past, you've failed to quit, but this time you're going to make your promise to quit, stick! And you're right that staying clean and sober is a cornerstone of building a life that will see you in school and getting a legal job for your pay. It will make all in your family, proud and happy. And it will really mean something when your baby starts saying, "Daddy!"

Love

love is like money
love is sweeter than honey
love got me praising her like a pearl
love i feel for a very nice girl
love got her shining like a dime
love in my eyes 'cause she mine

-Swagga Juan

From The Beat: If you really love her, you learn your lesson from incarceration and make some changes in your life. Claim the blessing of her love and stop messing up — do right!

Untitled

i'm from the hood
i don't care
what ninjas be saying
ninja be claimin'
da hood and be
high-power faking
i don't give a what
'cause i makes my money
i be going stewy in the club
and go eighteen dummy
i stay pulling girls
'cause i'm a boss
i stay hustling

-Lil' Swoll

From The Beat: How much money you make in here? Wake up call! Rub your eyes — are you seeing clear? This is just a taste of all the time you can waste ahead in your life, if you go back to being up to no good on the streets of your 'hood! Average it all out over the time you'll serve, and you get less pay than that fiend cut to the curb. Quit, go legit, and get paid by what you earn.

So Long, 'Hood

So long, 'hood. I guess it's over. I'm through. I then changed the game! The word from Bra-bra to Woodie: I'm'a miss those grimy times.

To be honest wit'cha 'hood, on some hood shhh, you know I'll see you in about six to nine months, or something like that. Feel me? I remember when I use to eat like baby suckin' two nipples. But anyway looks like I'm through for awhile. I remember them days when I ran from them dicks and they couldn't catch me fo' nothing. Guess I'm through with that shhh.

-Bo

From The Beat: You need to do more than guess, or else in six-to-nine, you'll up to the same self-deluded tricks, thinking you're so sick, till you get caught up with it again! You're too old now to settle for less, get up out the street mess, get an education, a legal job, and be a success!

It's Been Two Years

This Hollow from Berkeley, just coming through 'cause I feel like writing a piece on my ninja, Monster. On March sixth of 2005, the doctors pronounced my brother dead.

I learned most of my game from him. He always knew what to say when hard times had me by the throat. I just miss his presence and guidance. I love you my ninja, and life's been hard without you. Striking out! This be Hollow, ask 'bout me.

-Hollow

From The Beat: On a positive tip, we changed your name just a little bit — but we told you first. We would never say love doesn't get shown in a game that is played and owned by hate: "Don't hate the player, hate the game. "Cherish the love forever, but as far as his lacing you on game, remember that the game killed him — so keep the best and forget the rest.

Changing

I am willing to change, but it is hard to change when all you know is the streets. I wish I could have just gone to school and gotten good grade and played sports.

-Lil' Bugs

From The Beat: You can't change what you did in the past, but you can change what it means to you. When you've truly learned your lesson, you'll be ready to claim your blessing!

Feeling Good

last time i felt
really good
was when i was free
out and about
enjoying freedom

-No Name

From The Beat: The meaning of missing freedom is knowing it's time to change. Get out the game, so when you go free, you can maintain your freedom. No more stealing, slanging, banging. Go to school instead of posted up smoking and dranking.

Hello And Goodbye

G-vo to all those doin' tiempo behind bars. I hope for those who have been and are keeping real inside the walls, that you are doing well and staying strong. For those who are fronting and faking, stay away from trouble 'cause it can get real in a hurry.

As for this young vato, I am going to another groupie, but hopefully it's somewhere local because I just found out yo' boy got a lil' one on the way! I gotta step my game up, so my lil' one won't have to go through my struggles.

Well, this young vato, I'm'a cut the string from this kite, and I am out! Alrato.

-Flaco

From The Beat: For you child's sake you'll need to refocus "keeping it real" away from putting it down for you gang and put the emphasis squarely on being there for your little one, and the baby's momma if possible, too. Don't just step your game up, change your game so you don't run into incarceration's pain ever again — 'cause from now on it will harm your child more than you!

Do This

Today I woke up on the right side of the bed, feeling real good, thinking about when I'm getting out. For people that are in jail: well, you're in there, so make plans for yourself!

-No Name

From The Beat: Make plans that will keep your free, not have you chasing fast money for a minute then here, writing about how you got caught up in it!

The Last Time You Felt Really Good

The last time I really felt good was last month, when I wasn't in juvenile hall — duh!

I was feeling good because I was working full time, and it's always a good thing to have a job. I also was bringing my grades up to a 3.0 GPA (grade point average), which is to say, a 'B' average — honor status!

And last but not least, I had my family by my side — and I still do! And also my girl! So even though I'm here, I feel lucky!

-Rick

From The Beat: Yeah, you are lucky that you have a loving and supportive family and girlfriend to return to — hopefully, a job, too! So, if it was all so good, how did you mess up? Or did your past (something you did before you started doing good) come back to bite you?

The Price For Being Way Too Solid

The last time I really felt good was when I was out with my ninjas chilling. Everything was right. Ninjas had money in their pockets — we was eatin'!

That's the only time I feel cool, is when I'm politicking with my ninjas on my side of town. Forget this jail garbage! A ninja's just wasting hella time and missing hella money. But, oh well, this is the price I pay for being way too solid for these ninjas.

-Another ninja

From The Beat: You may be flossing how solid you are, but what you actually say is true — you were too solid — not meaning fully solid but overly solid with a game that uses street knowledge to keep you addicted till you get convicted or killed. If you go back to that same fast money, your days outside whether rainy or sunny will fly faster than your cash — and you'll be back here in a flash! Nah, don't fall for a fool's paradise. Grow wise: earn your money legally and stay outside the system by daily making the right decision.

What's On My Mind

When I wake up at camp the first thing that comes to my mind is stay out of trouble, don't talk when staff say 'Talk is Dead', and my family.

Before I go to sleep I think about my girlfriend.

Or when I'm on the outs I wake up and think about what I'm about to do for the day and don't bring out all my money before I spend it all. But that's all -- I'm 'bout to cut.

-Zuko

From The Beat: These are all good things to think about – the people you love, the things you need to do to stay in check, the rules to follow if you want a clean program. So tell us, what do you are the different things you have to do each day when you're on the outs?

Mad At Myself

I'm hella mad 'cause they brung me back and I just got out and came back here on a warrant, because I was supposed to go to court, and now they trying to get me for a stolo and a warrant is bad.

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: You didn't have much time on the outs. How could you have done things differently and stayed out? Will you do things differently in the future?

Beat With-Interview

TBW: So when do you get out?
Da President: In 2008 September
TBW: That's when you get out of Boys' Republic?
DP: Yeah
TBW: What do you expect there?
DP: To get my diploma and learn the real estate
TBW: Where is B.R.?
DP: On top of Chico Hill outside of LA.
TBW: How does your family feel about it?
DP: It doesn't matter as long as money is comin' in.
TBW: Will they visit you at Boys Republic?
DP: Hopefully.
TBW: Who's in your family?
DP: My mom, my brother, and Kenny Lattimore is in my family -- and he's famous!
TBW: Why you caught up?
DP: My so-called potna tripped me
TBW: Well, time's almost up. Any last words for our readers?
DP: Yeah, did ya boy Lil' Dre aka Da President. This that takeover man!

-Da President

From The Beat: Once you get that real estate license, come back to The Beat and hook us up! This area is expensive, and we could use a smart businessman to help us all find houses! In the meantime, good luck at Boys' Republic and while you're there, keep us updated on how you're doing for The Beat Without.

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good was when I was out with my girlfriend and my family. I was out there doing hella good; I was following all my probation officer's rules.

I need to get back out there and finish doing what I was doing. This is not the place for me! Plus I'm going to be a father soon. So I need to hurry up and get back out — that's the only place where I feel really good.

-Doogie

From The Beat: So what happened that brought you back to here? It's so important that you tell as that you're clear how you fell, 'cause how else will you stay out there where your loved ones dwell?

Still Waiting For My Placement

What's up, Beat? I'm still here, not any surprise there. These people are talking hella long to come get me! But what can I do?

At least I'm going to a group home and not somewhere else. I hope I leave before they start taking people to the new hall! Well, till next time, Beat.

-Ali

From The Beat: If you're in the new hall a minute, it won't hurt you. But those cameras in the rooms have got to mess with your head after a while! Let's pray all the counselors show good judgment, self-restraint and discretion. But just the idea will be enough to add another weight to a young detainee's stressing. If you're reading this from your group home, count your blessings — and get serious about really learning your lesson.

Angry

What it do, Beat? It's that Scarface from Richmond. Man, I'm just heated, 'cause the judge did me dirty! First he gave me EM (electric monitor) release, but then he pulled me back in — and gave me six months in Camp!

But I ain't trippin' too hard, 'cause I'll just pimp my program. To my mom and dad and to my lady: I'll be home soon for my weekend pass! To all those locked up, keep yo' head up and do yo' time. I'm out, till next time. Alrato!

-Scarface

From The Beat: What can you do but make the best of it? The only alternative is to make things worse. By the time you read this, you'll probably be gone and back from that first home visit. Let it inspire you to do what it takes to stay free after your final release.

Still Here!

I'm still in this joint, just waiting for my turn to leave. I'm supposed to be going to a placement, probably in Los Angeles — but anything is better than just waiting in this bee!

-Dennis

From The Beat: Yeah, almost any outside placement is better than waiting in a locked-down facility — but not really anything whatsoever. You feel? Keep a clear head so you don't have to come back here again.

Camping With My Family

The last time I felt really good was the last time I went camping with my family. I had nothing to worry about. I was just fishing, hiking back with my family and family's friends, getting drunk, and passing out under the stars.

-Mateo

From The Beat: It's too bad that in family's we teach our children to drink. It would have been fun without getting drunk, too. But, yeah, that sounds coo'. So do what you have to do to get free of the system, 'cause you know what you're missin'.

My Beautiful Family

The first thing in mind when I wake up in the morning is my beautiful family. Because I love them so much that my family comes first.

Because I love them so much that my family comes first than anything else. And my girl is on my mind too all the time, she's always there for me. And 'specially that I'm locked up inside the Hall, I'm always thinking 'bout my case and the judge , 'cause I really want to get out and start a new life. That's all I got to say. God bless you.

-Lil Daddy

From The Beat: Congratulations on your decision to make a new life, and on the people that are there for you as you make the change. Love keeps us strong, hold on to your love and get back to your family as soon as you can, be as true to your girl as she is to you. Peace.

Felt Good With My Family Doing Good

The last time I really felt good, is when I was on the outs with my family doing good — going to school to get good grades for the judge, so when I go back I can give him my report card to let him know that I'm doing good! And I was doing so good, too!

Yeah, and when I had got out from doing four months in here, I was doing good to get out, and I had got out, too — and was on home supe' for one month, and got off from doing good! That's when I was feeling so good. I felt good, too, when I was eating on the outs, too, and staying with my girl to make sure that she was satisfied with me. And she made me feel really good, too, almost everyday.

But right now, I'm really sad — because my little brah is about to run as soon as he gets his TR (temporary release) tomorrow. That makes me sad, 'cause there will be a warrant out on him. And, too, I'm sad because I'm back in here without my family and missing them each and every day. I pray to ask God to forgive me for my sins, and to help me have a really faithful day: to wake up, and stay up! And everyday to pray, pray, pray.

-G-dub

From The Beat: So what happened when you were out there doing so well? What brought you back to this juvenile hell? Did you catch a new case? Is it how you chase your money? Or was it something you'd done in the past that the law finally figured out at last and came to bite you like a dog in your ... we're just asking. Pray as if it all depends on God, but act as if it all depends on you.

The Last Time I Was Free I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good when I was out of juvenile hall, because I had more freedom I could do more stuff and 'till I got in here I didn't realize how much my family really cares about me.

Now that I am in juvenile hall I know my family really cares, so the last time I felt good was when I was at home with my mom and little brother.

If I could, I wouldn't have did what I had did so I can be home not in juvenile hall where I don't have any freedom.

-Joseph

From The Beat: What kind of stuff did you do when you were free? Where did it go wrong for you? What's your plan when you return home?

The last time I felt really good

The last time I felt really good is when I was free with my family and my lady.
I felt good when I was rippin' and runnin' the streets of Oakland
doin' what I want to do.
I start feeling bad when I got busted on some stuff
I had no place
picking up what I pick up
if I would just start with my lady I'd still be rippin' and runnin' the streets
but still feel good about myself

-Devion

From The Beat: Not sure what you are saying here, other than you were feeling good when you were free doing as you please. Now that you are confined, what changes are in order to better your life? Are you up to changing your ways?

Feeling Good

last time i was feeling right
was when the 'hood surrounded me
and i had some city-to-city female
attention

-Hollow

From The Beat: No doubt freedom beats incarceration, but if the facts you're not ready to be facing, then feeling right will be a memory more often than real. You feel? It's not you in the 'hood that's the problem, it's the 'hood in you that needs solving. It's time to do right, if you want to feel right — live free to move from city to city every night.

Good Days, Bad Days

To me they're just the same
How can you have a good day
When people around are lame
Bad day, good day
Aint that the same too
Me, myself
I don't have no clue
'Cause all my days are blue…

-Star

From The Beat: Are your days blue from sadness because you're locked up? Were you ever sad and felt blue while you were free? How did you deal with those feelings? Is there something you can do to make those days brighter? Do outside circumstances or people you can't control, really have that much power over the way you feel? Who's really in charge of your emotions? Do you think the position you put yourself in dictates how you'll be affected? Can you place yourself in a better position and how do you do so?

When I Felt Good

I always feel good when I get compliments on my art. I like the feeling I get when everyone wants me to draw a picture for them.

-Andre

From The Beat: That is an honor and a great feeling. Now share some of that art with The Beat Within!

Money

i'm paid
that's all i got to say
y'all can't see the young boy
'cause the money in the way
i'm getting cash in the fast lane
posted on the av' selling candy cane
trying to flood the town
like the katrina hurricane
it's militant in the hood, serving pain
i'll run up on you like what
and take your grandma' chain

-D'Tay

From The Beat: That is such stupid stuff, trying to prove your tough by stealing someone's chain! Here you are locked up, so what did you really gain? You can have a reputation in the Pen' or you can learn how to live right and stay free, young man. That's not candy you're selling but poison that cuts two ways — does in the one that pays, plus the one that gets paid. Time for a change unless you like living this way, doing what you're told 'cause the key to your door someone else holds.

The Last Time You Felt Really Good

The last time I felt real, was Wednesday, when I was out with my female, feeling real good!

All I remember is getting dropped off and her smiling and saying, "See you tomorrow." The next thing I know, there I am in court on Thursday — and the judge said, "Detain."

-Lil' T

From The Beat: 'Cause you missed school? 'Cause you'd caught a dirty? 'Cause you caught a new case? What happened? Why'd the judge say that?

Growing Old Behind Bars

Man, what I feel about growing old behind bars? I been here for one month and five days. I'm gon' have my birthday in juvenile hall with these people that I don't even know. If they ain't my mom or dad I don't give a shhh.

-Erin

From The Beat: The hall is no place to spend a birthday, so cut off from your loved ones. Can you imagine what it would be like to spend year after year, birthday after birthday, pent up in a cell? It's hard to imagine that it's a real possibility when you're fourteen and you feel like you have your whole lifetime to change. The point is, no one plans to spend their life in prison, but a whole lot of people live and die there, looking back on those younger years and wishing they could go back. Think about it.

The Las Time I Felt Good

The last time I felt good was a few weeks ago. I hope that I could get out before my birthday. Because I know that I would feel better because I would be out of here and I could spend my birthday with my homeboys and my baby mama and my family.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: The small things in life, right? Birthdays with your family, feeling good, spending time with your baby and your baby mamma. Why do you think those things are so difficult to achieve? Is there anyway you can plan your life so there is more of that and less jail time?

Baby Girl

I'll always be your baby girl and I would follow you around the world. Could never care for no one else. If I'm without you I'm by myself. I will always be your baby girl and I would follow you around the world. It doesn't matter what we're going through. No matter what, I'm staying here with you.

-Lil Baby Girl

From The Beat: Are you there for that special someone now? How does that affect your relationship? Your presence and compassion may be really missed right now? Can your relationship weather the storm of you not being around? Is your relationship able to grow as you may want it to, if you're not around? How would you feel if you were in his shoes?

Me

G is for: Gangsta
I is for: Irresistible
R is for: Real
L is for: Lustful
Y is for: Young

L is for: Love never lost
I is for: In situations we can't ignore
L is for: Lost in a messed up society
P is for: Precious time never forgotten
A is for: All we got is each other
P is for: Phenomenal is what I pour
A is for: Attitude like you cop shoes

F is for: Fall in too deep
A is for: All bad
S is for: Stunt-tastic
T is for: Tragedy's finding me

L is for: Long lessons to live by
I is for: In serious danger
F is for: Far away is where I can hide
E is for: Except the streets 'cause they don't love me
The streets don't love nobody

-Girly

From The Beat: We will accept your style and qualities that you've mentioned about yourself, but hope that your writing will grow as you continue to participate. As you can see, we edit out the part where you mentioned, specifically where you're from. It's cool to be prideful of that fact but we believe there are better ways of sharing that information. One question, if you know that about the streets, will you continue to keep going back to those same streets? Is it really worth it then?

No Word

Lately, I don't know why every time I think of about you, I want to cry. It's not the cry that's makes my heartache. It makes me give thanks that finally I have a chance to breath, and thank God for all the goodness that He sent me.

It's been a while since you've been around, and I think I like how everything is going now. Spending time just lets me know that I need you and I never want to let you go mentally, you were mentally. You were meant for me. Not to mention how I feel your physicality. So it took a while but it was worth the wait.

When I'm riding with you, laughing with you. I can't believe I'm so addicted to you, but I'm not ashamed. It's so hard to explain. There are no words that I could say.

-Lil' Baby Girl

From The Beat: Good memories are good to have to carry us through the hard times. To have that special connection and bond with someone is very precious. You mentioned how you're thankful to have a chance to breathe. Do you feel like you were consumed with that relationship? Were you still able to do things that you needed to do for yourself? Or did you barely find the time for yourself? Is there a better way to manage (without neglecting important areas of) your life? What are your plans for when you get out? Have you taken the time to think and plan for that yet?

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time you felt really good, when I was at home in my room watching television, and on the phone talking to my man. And he not give a dam. But now I am out on the street. Just outside and I am stomping my foot, if you don't know what I mean. I am just going dumb and everybody is just looking at me. So that's the last time I feel really good.

But now things is not going right because I am in jail and not raising hell. Tell you one thing. I don't care. So this is the last time I had a really good time.

-Lolita

From The Beat: Did raising hell contribute to where you're currently at and if that's the case, then can that really be considered a good time? Can you have fun without putting yourself in a position to be incarcerated? What are some things other than what you've mentioned that you consider fun? Is planning a better future for yourself in mind? Does getting incarcerated hurt or help what you eventually want out of life? Is this the real way or just a phase you're going through?

Ride Out

It's Friday night
I want to ride out and see what's going on
Feeling so right.
Going to have a good time wherever I go
As long as I'm having fun
We can stay until the very next day
Sometimes when you're around you make me want to do wild things baby
Let's do something crazy
Tell me can you make me feel like that though
Do those things I won't forget
Swerving from lane to lane
Blood rushing through my veins
Looking at me that way, I know what's on your brain
You're hand is slowing moving up and down my leg
We're almost there but you act like you can't wait
Baby, let's do something crazy
Tell me can you make me feel like that
Do those things I won't forget.

-Lil' Baby Girl

From The Beat: Everyone wants to have fun and enjoy life. Hopefully your way of having fun doesn't involve consequences that you'll regret. How important is doing something crazy worth to you really? You have the power of controlling the way you feel. Our actions have a lot to do with how we feel. Remember that feelings will pass and sometimes don't last.

Not The Perfect Friend

I am so tired with my friends turning out to be enemies.
Jealous 'cause I am on top.
Mad 'cause I just don't care and don't listen. I
know I am not the perfect friend.
I would never steal, cheat, or betray a friend.

-Quaneda

From The Beat: Sounds like you're picking the wrong people as friends. How do you make smarter choices to avoid that from happening again? Are you opening yourself up and trusting others too soon? Or does it involve you not caring and not listening? What do you think you'd need to work on in order to become a better friend? The qualities you mentioned about yourself, says that you have some of those rare qualities found in a good friend. Build on that and be wiser with you select to be around.

This is Me

S is for: Sexy
A is for: Aggressive
R is for: Real
I is for: Irresistable
N is for: Nasty
A is for: All woman.

-Rina

From The Beat: We'd like to think that you have more qualities than what you've mentioned. WE dumped the "Savage" from your piece. The Beat is to teach dnot flaunt you are the baddest and the worst. Some may look at the qualities you mentioned as negative, what would you say to them? Have those characteristics helped or hurt your true identity? How are you on the inside? What would you say or think of someone who had all the qualities you mentioned? Would that someone be someone you keep close, or far from you?

To Friends and Family

If I were to give a farewell speech to say goodbye to my friends and family, all I would have to say is: Stay away from all the bullshhh, because you know right from wrong! So don't mess up.

-Jeff

From The Beat: It's the truth, but why do so many refuse to face the fact that if they don't act like they know right from wrong they either won't be free or won't be alive for too long?

Could the governor or president make us suffer more than we've already suffered

Feeling Good With MY LAdy

I was with my lady
Doing what we do
down the highway
kissing on the freeway
my first time with someone older than I am
felt so good I
thought I was in heaven.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: Being in love is a good feeling. Hope you get that back someday sooner than later.

Thoughts

Could the days go by
any slower
Could the nights get
any darker
Could the girls you have to see everyday
when you wash up in the morning
get anymore irritating
Could the people I don't even know
try to change me
Could the governor or president
make us suffer more than we've
already suffered
I think this every morning I wake up
and every night before I go to sleep
Having to be in juvenile hall
for the third time in less than a month
Now I have to wait 'till I can go home
to hopefully stay with my dad
I just hope the judge don't say
"detained."

-Nae Nae

From The Beat: Are these emotions and frustrations enough to make you not come back? If so, what do you do differently that keeps you free and way from these frustrations? Are people trying to change you, or hoping that you can look at things from another perspective? Obviously there's something you've done that's gotten you incarcerated. So it may be wise to hear other opinions from people who are not in your situation. What if the judge says what you'd dread hearing? How would you react to it? Would you make your current situation worse, or would you make the best out of it?

Growing Old Behind Bars

I'm growing old behind these bars. Day after day same thing everyday same clothes same routine.

-Charles

From The Beat: Are you ready to step up and break the jailhouse routine? It's on you!

Now

i'm
sad
now
bye

-Ail

From The Beat: Sometimes we're doing a lot better than we're feeling,

If Ya Boy Was Out

What's good with The Beat? Man, Bundy just chillin', keepin' it lit, ya heard. But ninja, when I get out it's gone be extra big, ya boy with fat 'bauds wit' fat 'timms on, big blunts and gold fronts, Just let me get 'em. It's young money and we on like a television, the weather channel girl. But I don't broadcast. I throw up more cash and change the forecast. Ya boyfriend's lame. I'll make it rain on him. I'll make it flood. Now you gone need a boat. Ya Boy Bundy go slidin' through the wind.

-Bundy U7

From The Beat: We can't tell if "when you get out" is so far in the future that you're just having fun clowning, or whether you really aren't thinking about your future and how to make it better. We wish you'd take yourself — and The Beat — more seriously because you have knowledge and the ability to convey it. We're still waiting to see it expressed in these pages.

Growing Old Behind Bars

Man if I was growing old behind bars, man, I would just ride it out. I ride it out from my cell in the pen. But yeah, I'm just go do my thang and do what I can do to keep my sanity.

-Poon-G U3

From The Beat: Wouldn't it be better to find a way to avoid the situation in the first place? But if it came to that, what would you do to hold onto your sanity?

"A" On A Spanish Test

Last time I felt good was when I got an A on my test in Spanish class. My mom and pop felt good, so that made me feel good. When I got home, we went straight to the mall and I got a lot of things like clothes and shoes. So that was the last time I felt good.

-Dominic U3

From The Beat: Congratulations on your good grade. When you saw how it made your parents feel, did it make you want to get better grades in other subjects? How are you doing in school now?

Feeling Warm And Comfortable

The last time I felt really good inside was on Thursday and Friday before I got locked up in jail. Before I got locked up in jail on Thursday, March 1st, 2007, I was In Oakland, CA. where I live at, having fun with my family. And then at the end of the day, I spent the rest of the night with my boyfriend Ken Ken.

Then on Friday, March 2, 2007, I woke up in his arms, warm and comfortable. Then I went home down the street from where I was at. Then later that night, I came to San Francisco. I should have not been here in the first place. Then Saturday morning at 8;42 a.m. I was arrested.

-Chardonnay U5

From The Beat: We're not sure what happened or where. Did you come to SF and do something that you should not have done? And are you now facing consequences for those choices? Wherever you are, you will be required to make choices. So it's not the city you should have avoided, it's the behavior. Next time, don't do anything that gives the cold system power over your life, and then you can remain warm and comfortable.

I Hope

I hope The Beat will help me.
I hope I will be out on my hearing.
I hope I won't get sent to CYA.
I hope I can see my family often.
I hope I will get my freedom back.
I hope I will get one more chance from the judge.
I hope I can see the streets March 9th.
I hope whoever reads this hopes with me.
I hope the DA shows some type of mercy.
I hope my attorney can get me out.
I hope I can make it out for my 19th b-day.
I hope I can see the people I want to see.
I hope I won't go crazy in here.
I hope I don't need to stare at four walls.

-Lil' JJ U7

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon. We hope you decide not to do the things that brought you here. We hope you have the strength to say no to friends who will lead you into harm's way. We hope you show your parents how much they mean to you by sacrificing some of the other things that put money in your pocket. We hope you have learned that freedom is the most precious gift of all and requires care and self-love to maintain. We hope we never see you locked up again!

Best Friend

The last time I was happy was when I saw the girl I loved. First thing I said was her name and smiled. So much feelings, so much that I don't got the guts to tell her how I feel. Everyone told me that I would fall for her. They told me you can't have a friend of the opposite sex. I never believed them until two or three months ago. Is it another crush, or is it love? Either way, my feelings for her won't change.

-Chowsee U2

From The Beat: We're no experts in this area, but it sounds like a tough situation to be in! Is she involved with anyone? How do you think she feels towards you? Maybe she'd want to know how you really feel towards her? It's a touchy subject. Do you think if you told her and she didn't feel the same way, that it would affect your friendship? Have you ever asked others how they feel towards what you're going through? What has been some of their responses?

The Most Beautiful Word Is An F Word

Oh, God, how I love to love them
But I hate, hate to miss them
I'm in a state of confusion
For you see, for me, this is a small hell
And even smaller is the piece of heaven I get
From the letters I receive and the phone calls I make
But if that right there is heaven to me
What could be better than heaven?
Why it is life and living itself!
With family

-Khanh U3

From The Beat: You're very lucky to have a family you love to love and hate to miss. Not everyone has that kind of emotional support from their family, so we wonder whether you feel like you've let them down. How will you make it up to them? We know what they want... you, at home, where you belong. Can you give them what they want?

Last Time I Felt Good

Last time I felt good was when I made the winning point in the game playin' for the Warriors. Everybody was asking me how did I do that, and they told me, "That was tight!" I was feeling so good, I thought I was a superstar or something. But yeah, I was feeling real good. I was in love with myself way more than I ever was. I'm out

-Lil' D U5

From The Beat: What a wonderful feeling that must have been, like a movie star. How long were you able to enjoy that feeling before it crashed under the current circumstances?

The Last Time I Was Out

The last time I was out I was with a girl, the love of my life. We went out to eat. We had a wonderful time. That's what I like to do. I can't wait to get out so I could start a new life, like go to school, work, have a family of my own, my own house, do what a man is supposed to do, support his family.

-Gegs U7

From The Beat: We like all your goals. What would help you the most to achieve them? What do you need to do to stay out of here?

See You Soon

I want to say goodbye I'm a be gone, but not for long The dope fiends that used to flock For a taste of my little white rock Pink house, avocado steps Skipping school when it was time for tests Itchy trigger finger Short-term memory So my thoughts don't linger Both of my pockets are overweight Put my product out like bait This is just my fate Block to block Now I'm in the slammer Night or day I'm a be out 'Til my hair turns gray Day by day I'm here now But it's ok -Birdman LCRS From The Beat: You're a good poet, but it sounds like you consider dealing drugs your fate. If so, are you prepared to spend considerable amounts of time in juvy, group homes, YA, or state prison when you're eighteen? If you think juvy and the Ranch are okay for now, are you ready to sacrifice your future freedom forever? Spending your elder years in prison for some drugs? What else can you do with your talents to earn some money?

Good/Bad Well the good news is: When I get out, I will graduate 1-28-08, and I'll be going to college. I'm supposed to graduate next year--June, 2008, but even better--I graduate one semester earlier! The bad news is: I'm here.

-Lil' Eric LCRS

From The Beat: If all goes well you'll be out of high school soon and have earned your diploma. We hope you'll definitely go to college, but you'll probably have to end your career as a young man in the juvenile justice system. Can you deal with that?

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt good was not too long ago, maybe even a month or two ago. I was posted with my girl and felt like the world was my playground. We smoked, drank, and altogether just had a good time. I was in a good space.

It was nearly 2:30 a.m. We put on a movie and was enjoying each other's company in many ways. But then it happened. Someone knocked on da door. They knocked as if they were the police. I'm growing drugs left and right. Knocked on the windows startled her as she walked upstairs only to discover her husband was released from San Bruno jail. It was crazy.

I fled out the back doors as he entered the front. Three hours later the happiness ended. I was on my way to Hillcrest Juvenile. Still ain't seen out side yet!

-Lil' D U3

From The Beat: Do you mean you were messing with another man's wife? That's not only very irresponsible, it's morally reprehensible. If you came home to find your wife messing with another man, what would you do? Would you feel justified in anything you might do to him or to her? There are so many females out there, why would you hook up with one who was already married? It's not clear what "crime" you committed to get yourself locked up at Hillcrest, nor is it clear how you moved from that hall to this one. Any details?

I fled out the back doors as he entered the front. Three hours later the happiness ended.

Farewell To The Streets

I'm probably going to write to my friends. I'm going to miss them a lot. Hope everything's fine with them. Tell them to stay out of trouble. Stop arguing amongst themselves. Even though me and some others are gone, I promise we'll be back when we can. Just hold everything down and make sure no one steps out of line.

-JJ U3

From The Beat: How is this a farewell? When you promise to be back, then you're not leaving anything behind. When you go back, will you change anything about what you do, or will you just keep doing the things that lead to lock-up?

Feeling Good

The last time I felt good in the morning was when my girl would call to wake me up, and just lay in bed, talking with her for hours, knowing that she hasn't done that since three months ago.

-JJ U3

From The Beat: If that was the last time you felt good, then how are you preparing yourself not to lose it again? In the future, please don't write about all three topics. You really aren't able to say very much when you divide your writing into such small pieces. You have an hour to write on a topic, and we expect to see more than a few sentences. So next, just choose one topic to write about, and write as much as you can. Thanks.

The Last Time...

The last time I felt really good was at the homie house, because it be crackin' at his house after we smoke up, feel me. And his mom is hella nice, treat me like I'm her son too. I just feel good at his house.

And the last time I felt good, it was when I got a family visit. I was hella happy because I got to see my family and my nephew. That's what makes me feel good.

-Lil' Kut U2

From The Beat: Being treated like a part of the family would make just about anyone feel good. Are there other things that make a place "crackin'" besides smoking? How does this affect your probation? Seeing family members most of the time will bring a smile to a person's face. We know your nephew means a lot to you, but are you setting a bad example with your smoking and getting locked up? Has he ever said how he feels when you're not around, or having to come visit you in the halls? What kind of a role model for him do you want to be when you get out of here?

Cherish Freedom

The last time I felt really good was when I was on the outs and I had my freedom even though it didn't feel good. Now I'm in here thinking how much I should cherish my freedom

-Just-ice U6

From The Beat: What do you mean it didn't feel good when you had your freedom? How will you cherish your freedom when you regain it?

Blowin' Through The Wind

It seems like every time I get locked up, everything I say to da judge is "Blowing through the wind." Why? You tell me. But sometimes when I be in the cell, I think about my life and the bullshhh the judge and the DA throw at me and it's just done. Blowin' through the wind.

But me, myself, I just sit in my cell and rap, talkin' about some shhh dat I've been through. Ninjas talk about that 'hood shhh, but when it comes down to it, it's just blowin' in the wind. But where I'm from, it ain't sweet. I'm from Richmond. People get killed every night, so I had to move. I got locked right back up.

-Young Rleo U3

From The Beat: Are you just blowing in the wind, or are you made of more substantial stuff? You write about the bs the judge and DA are throwing at you, but nothing about the bs you're doing to get yourself locked up. All the complaints in the world won't change the judge or the DA, but you have the power you need to change the outcome by changing your own behavior. Do you bear any responsibility for your current situation? If so, then you bear an equal responsibility for keeping yourself out of situations like this. Are you up to that task?

School Makes My Head Ache

I used to like school, especially science—the experiments. I used to like to make light out of electricity out of potatoes and dissect frogs, even though it's nasty, gross.

I don't like writing. I haven't been in school in months, so I dropped out. I ran from the group home. It's boring in here now. School is too long. I get headaches. I wake up with headaches, because of stress.

-Delvon U3

From The Beat: If you like science, the only way to expand your knowledge is through school. Lots of times we have to do things we find boring to prepare us to be able to do other things with our lives that we won't find boring. You dropped out of school, but dropped into juvenile hall. Was that a good trade?

When I Was Out

The last time I felt good is when I was out before this time I came to jail. Because I was going to school all the time, I was getting good grades and doing what I was supposed to do.

-Ant U2

From The Beat: So what happened? What stopped you from continuing to do what "you were suppose to do?" Have you thought about what got in your way the last time? How do you prepare yourself for the next time, just in case the same situation arises? Or for any other obstacles that may get in the way?

I Want To Be Free

I don't want to see myself behind doors, locked up. I don't even know what happened before this time happened. I want to be out and free. I love Mc Donald's. I love freedom and getting to be able to do what you want. I don't want even the slightest chance of being forgotten by my friends or family.

-JJ U3

From The Beat: Everybody wants to be free — especially those who aren't. The question is, what changes do you plan to make in your own life that will guarantee that you won't lose your freedom again?

How I Feel

What's up wit' the thugs? This yo' ninja Skindonesia. Man, they fin to send yo' boy to the Ranch fo' the next year. Man, my ninjas just got hit up the other day and shhh.

-Skindonesia U7

From The Beat: We had to cut the threat you made at the end of this piece.

Being With Mi Familia

The last time I have felt good is when I had freedom and could do what I want when I feel like it. I could hang out wherever I want, but the most thing I feel good fo' is being with mi familia and making them feel better about me, not having to go to juvy for a long time, and being with my girl and to make her feel very loved. If I'm in here, that's just making her feel sick inside and very lonely. So take care of your loved ones and don't come back to the devil's playground aka juvy.

-Lil' Speedy U3

From The Beat: We like your determination not to come back here for all the good reasons you listed. If you felt good when you were free, and you feel bad for how your family and girl feel with you not in their lives, what do you plan to change when you get out of here? Will you stop doing some things, or start doing other things, that will keep you with those that love you?

Chinatown

Chinatown, it was the good and for the bad
Always hot, especially when other people make it hot for yourself
There's people you can't trust, people backstabbing, making you mad Youngling doing drugs, smoking stogies, damaging yo' health
You Chinatown people will barely see me
So CYA Chinatown Gs.

-Chinatown Kangaroo U2

From The Beat: Your description of Chinatown doesn't sound that different from any other 'hood. How did you contribute to your environment? Were you one of the people you speak of doing drugs and damaging your health? Or do you handle yourself differently? What kind of community would you like to live in, and how can you play your part in making it happen?

Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt good is the last time I was with a female. The last time I was with a female I was going bad in it.

-D-Boy U2

From The Beat: Since that was the "last time," what was the time before that? What are some other things that make "you feel good?" Can you "feel good" being and doing something by yourself? Or do you need others around you in order to "feel good?" One thing that makes us feel bad is when we read a Beat piece that's only two sentences in length! Being lazy is not a good quality for moving ahead with your life.

Homeless On The streets

Every time I was walking on the streets, all I was seeing people sleep on the street if they don't have a house or home, if they do or don't do drug. They have kid that need their support. Why they out there doing wrong? They kid out there with no food.

-Shelly M U5

From The Beat: It is a shame that some people are so selfish that they take care of their own needs before their children's. But you can't do anything about the wrong that other people do, only the wrong that you do. Do you have a house or home? What are your plans for when you get back there?

The Last Time I Felt Really Good

The last time I felt really good I was wearing my own clothes and socks and shirts. The last time I felt good I was in my own bed, not sleeping on some hard concrete bed with see-through blankets. I really felt good when I used to pick the kind of food that I liked and drink my kind of drinks, not eat some weird kind of food that make your stomach hurt later that day. I can still 'member all those times I used to walk into class late and sit in the chair I wanted to sit in.

-Kris U3

From The Beat: Isn't it strange that we don't really appreciate the simple benefits of freedom until we no longer have them? Will the memory of what you're missing affect any of the future decisions you'll be making when you get out from under your current situation?

Back Here For No Crime

Man, damn dude, I'm back up in here again for some bull that never even happened. I was released on January 27th. It's March 6th and I'm back. My birthday is in five days and I'm really mad as hell. But I am going to keep my cool. I think that they might try to play me because I got violent charges. So I'm gone see what's gonna happen. All right then, Beat.

-Young Drew U2

From The Beat: We can see why you're "mad as hell" because you were barely out a month. What happened? Are they going to "play you" or have you given them a reason to do so? You must be very frustrated with yourself and hopefully you can "keep your cool." There's a lesson to be learned in this and we hope you can get the message.

my experience in jail is don't trust nobody

My Experience In jail

I was always talking about, "I am never going to jail," calling all my friends jailbirds 'cause they went to jail. But now look at who in jail. But this something different. Everything else I never got, not that it's none of your business. So yeah, my experience in jail is don't trust nobody. You in here by yourself and being patient knowing who I am.

-Lil' D U5

From The Beat: How did you fall into the same traps your friends already fell in? Who do you think is calling you a jailbird? What do you plan to do on the outs so that you're never one again?

Growing Old Behind Bars

Well me, I've been behind locked doors for a while, and I can admit I've been in and out of here ever since I was a young teen. I'm about to be 18 years old in six months, feel me? I know fo' show that I'm better than that, feel me, because I did some crazy stuff when I was young, but I know that I am better.

I feel I should be given another chance like my sister Jasmine. She did show them who was boss by being on the run for a year. Then she got tired of being on the run and asked to turn herself in. He told her not to turn herself in because she would have to wait till she got her paperwork done. Now she's free. I wish it was me.

-Allen U2

From The Beat: Do you think that the gentleman we're speaking of planned to get caught up? Some things you just never plan for, like receiving a life sentence, death, etc. More than likely, you'll be given another chance, but what do you do with that chance? What happened to your sister can't really be compared to what is or should happen to you. What if you're on the run and get caught up for something? What happens then? Why can't you get off probation by doing what's expected of you? You're about to be 18 where the consequences and probation requirements may be harder than that of a juvenile. Are you prepared for that? If you were the judge and someone like you, who's been "in and out of here" many times, came before you, why would you give yourself another chance? Your track record might make anyone think that you've already had a second chance... and a third, a fourth, etc. etc. Why would this time be different?

Growing Old Behind Bars

The beginning of 2006/2007 was great. I had everything together and it felt like everything was forever. But after my drinking got heavy, and the time I did my injury, I neva got back. I could be doing something better out in the world than bangin' a box, feeling caged like a fox.

I cannot buy time back, but I can make up for it because I got plenty of days and gears full of events and wonderful tears. This year from the start has been party, party, party, party. And now it's called hearty, hearty, hearty. So now I'm getting fat and old. I'm only 13 and feelin' like I'm 48. I feel like every time I smile, I feel the wrinkles crinch crinch. Now I just want to have a straight face and get out of this place. Now I feel like shhh, and been through a lot of experiences and feelin' like I been in a pit.

-Shaboobabababy U5

From The Beat: We think you skipped too lightly over the most significant words in this piece: "my drinking got heavy..." You thought you could make your problems disappear by drinking, and you only added far worse problems. So we hope you confront that problem directly. Whether you're here or free, don't let alcohol control you.

Dancing Makes Me Happy

What good with The Beat? This ya boy, Twon, coming from that nice unit 4 status. Yeah, I'm up in unit 4 now 'cause they said ya boi was getting too old in unit 3. But anyways, I'm 'bout to put you up on game about this topic.

So what makes ya boi feel good when I'm out the 'hood is when am at a party fo' real fo' real, because ya boi is a dancer and it be hella females there. I be dancing with the girls and battling ninjas, you feel me, 'cause ya boi and his right-hand man, we be eating ninjas, making ninjas look dumb. So that's what make a ninja feel happy.

So like my boi Weezy say, I'm done talking and poof an' gusto

-Twon U3

From The Beat: If dancing is what makes you happy, then you better find a way to dance out of here and back to one of those parties you like. There's no future here for a dancer, unless you like dancing alone or with other males. Getting out of here is a certainty. It's staying out of here that we're concerned about. What's your plan for achieving that goal?

I Got It

Yeah, I go hard
Thought you knew, yeah, I'm gonna ball
I took a loss
Slipped an' took a big fall
All I could do now is stand tall
Thought I wasn't
Not at all
Forget what chu heard
It's what chu know
E'rythang I got
I got it on my own
I got a lot of haters but I ain't even trippin' though
I just dust them off
An' go mess with bini at da liquor sto'
What you think I'm out here getting' it fo'
I don't know 'bout you, but I'm tryna ball out of control
I sell nickels, dimes an' solids
If you don't know, ask about it
Whateva ya need, mess wit' me... yeah I got it

-Lil' Bipp U5

From The Beat: Hmmm, interesting. You're "out there gettin' it" and even though you're in here, you "got it." So, if we want freedom, should we go to you because you got it? If everything you have, you got on your own, then you also got here on your own. We need smart leaders for our broken communities, good role models for our children. Can you give us that?

Gonna Do Me

When I was with ma ninjas on the block, I was doing all the wrong shhh. I was not coming in the spot hella late. Ma moms used to be worry 'bout me and all the shhh.

So one day I got a Camry. I was drivin' it around, and the boys got on me so I pushed it to the limit. When I got rapped and came to the halls, it made me think what I could have been doing with maself. So when I get out, I'm gone do me no matter what you feel me.

-T-House U3

From The Beat: To keep it real, we don't actually feel you when you say you're going to "do you." What does that mean? More stolen cars? More running from the cops? Or does it mean the opposite — going to school, staying off the block, doing what you have to do to stay free? Don't you owe your mom that much?

Dropping Like Flies

Man, Beat, I just wanna say that ninjas is dropping like flies out here. And I just want to let everybody know it's ugly out here and you betta stay with something if you don't want to be the next one to drop like a fly.

-Hot Rod U7

From The Beat: What do you mean "stay with something" to avoid dropping? What is the "something" that you are going to stay with?

I Hope To Get Out

I hope to get out, change my life to a better thing. I want a job to be a counselor like maybe at the YMCA. I hope to get away from the violence.

-Sis U7

From The Beat: We hope you can get away from the violence, too. Wanting to change your life is the beginning of changing it. What is your plan for becoming a counselor? You have to finish school, and then what do you want to do?

I Did My Homework

The last time I felt real good was when I actually went to all my classes after I did all my homework the night before.

-Cookies U5

From The Beat: We hope this isn't an example of doing "all" your homework, because you had an hour to come up with one sentence. One! How about a few more details, like why you stopped going to all your classes and doing your homework the night before, and why — if it felt real good — did you give it away?

That Group Home Interview Felt Really Good

The last time I felt good was when I got my interview from my group home, and they told me that I've been accepted. So I was so happy. I finally got there, so I ran. Then, a couple of hours after I ran, I got caught.

They bring me back here. So, when I came, I was thinking to myself, saying that I'll never come back here because I always have to listen to them and do what they say and I hated when people tell me to do things and I don't want to do the things that they're telling me to do.

So, when I got release, I got in front of the building and yelled freedom and I felt so good and that was one of the best times of my entire life. That Felt Good!!

-Gregory U5

From The Beat: We're missing something. You were so happy the group home accepted you, and then you ran... What happened between "so happy" and "so I ran"? We can imagine how great it must feel to be standing on the outside of the walls yelling "Freedom" instead of behind the walls yelling, "Let me out!" But don't risk that great feeling by doing anything that can lead you right back to lock-up.

Check It Out

Da streets all I know, let the truth be told
raised where da nights was always cold
why crack was sold, now fightin' cases
and penal codes, they tryna lock ya boy down
And put my life on hold
the DA's tryna wash me like a laundry load
but I never fold
throw ma case out, no evidence,
this shhh getting old

-Lil' Scari U6

From The Beat: We can see why you're getting tired of the same routine. But we wonder if you're just tired of the DA trying to "wash you," or if you're also tired of your own contribution to your situation. Whether there is evidence or not (and if there is not, you'll beat this case), you are the one putting yourself on front street giving the system (the DA, the judge, the PO, the counselors) all the power they need to make your life even colder than you experienced it on the streets. Since "they" will never change, will you?

Out Of My Group Home

The last time I've ever felt good was when I gotten out of Hanna's. Hanna's is a group home. I went with my bro's and smoked a cig. Then went to Broadway and posted there. And that when I felt good.

-White Crane U6

From The Beat: How long were you able to enjoy your freedom? What keeps you from holding onto it? Was what you did to get here worth it?

Farewell To The Streets

Was up wit' The Beat? Dis Hot Rod and I'm off to the Ranch for 12 long ones. But to the streets I'll be back soon. To set the streets on fire.

-Hot Rod U7

From The Beat: Maybe after a year at the Ranch you'll be less eager to set the streets on fire (and promise yourself a return trip to lock-up), and more eager to move your own life forward. It seems to us that you've already given away far too much of your young life to keep doing the things that lead you here... or worse.

Don't Be Blind An You Know Why

I'm a woman that loves myself, but I was blind by a man who said he loved me. He make me cry. I was crazy for trusting him, but my life goes on. So now, bye-bye. But now I'm locked up for this ninja and don't know why. Maybe because he lied and got me doing time.

-ZeZe Baby U5

From The Beat: Many stories have been written over many centuries by women who have been blinded by conniving men. And everybody has shed tears over lost love at one time or another. We know you'll get over him. Did he avoid the consequences that you're now living? Well, sometimes we just have to chalk it up to experience, never put ourselves in that situation again, pick ourselves up and keep going forward.

Can't Waste My Life Behind Bars

Growing old behind bars is something that I cannot afford at this point of my age. There are a couple of reasons why I can't waste my life behind bars. The first is that I feel I would miss a whole lot on the outside. Now I know I can accomplish more being free than being locked up behind bars. And that's only one of my reasons.

-Murph The Young U7

From The Beat: Of course you can accomplish more as a free person than as a slave of the system. But tell us, what do you want to accomplish? What's your plan for achieving this goal?

Yet Another Placement

Farewell to the 'hood. I'ma be gon a minute but I will be back. No doubt, I'ma go do my time and not run so I can be wit' the homies once again, holdin' the block down.

The last time I felt really good was July 14th 2006. I had got released from my group home. But it didn't last 'cause I'm back in here going to yet another placement.

-Smokey U6

From The Beat: Have you examined why it didn't last, why you're back here waiting for another placement? You say that you'll be back "holdin' the block down," but we think the block has been holding you down.

The Last Time

The last time I felt really good was when I was with my goons. It was my birthday and we went to Milpitas, the skating rink. It was my first time there, and we was just chillin.' Then, after all that, I took my big head ta the movies. We took pictures and talked. That was the last time I felt good. Now I'm in here, and it'll be a while till I feel that way again.

-JR U6

From The Beat: Did you enjoy skating? Are you a good skater? These are good memories to have, but it's time to start building some new good memories. We hope when you do feel this good again, you'll be able to hold onto that feeling by keeping yourself free.

All I Say Is Real Shhh

This Dopes getting at y'all, but this Beat Within shhh is fake as hell, 'cause they ain't really putting what I'm saying, 'cause all I do is say real shhh, but I'm getting out this week, so anyways, 'cause ain't shhh changed.

-Dopes LCRS

From The Beat: Your real shhh sucks. Sorry. Sometimes you write beautiful essays, but other times, your simply inappropriate. Please don't feel personally dissed when your writings don't make it. Read The Beat and figure it out!

I Was With My Homies

The last time I felt really good I was with my homies chillin' and drinkin' and smokin'. I knew I was gonna get locked up already. So I was just like, "Forget it, I'm gonna have fun."

I did hella stupid stuff that night. Now that I am in juvy, I remember those good times. If I never had those good times, then I would not have nothing good to remember. Peace out homies.

-Lionfishy U2

From The Beat: Thinking back, do you believe you would have done any of the "stupid stuff" if you weren't "drinking and smoking?" Would your situation have been worse if you got caught for any of those things? Aren't there other memories that you can think of that are good? What are some of the other things that you consider fun? What are your plans for when you get out? Do they involve not coming back? Hopefully it's not creating new memories that you can reminisce on for the next time!

Farewell Speech To The Streets

Farewell. I'm leaving you now not to return until I get my life together. It's strange that I have to do this, but it's for best interest. Block movement was not ok. It ended me up in jail.

-Mark D U6

From The Beat: Declaring your farewell to the streets is not quite the same thing as actually leaving those streets. So, in addition to this promise you're making, what are your plans for when you regain your freedom?

Freedom Feels Good

The last time I felt good was when I was spending the morning with my girlfriend. Then I spent time with mom. She bought me a meal. I felt good. Didn't want any more. And then I spent time with y folks till 9:00 at night. It was fun.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: If being free is fun, then why do you do the things that cause you to lose your freedom? Do you plan to keep doing the same things when you get out, or do you plan to stop coming here?

Knocking It Out

What's up with The Beat? Man, it's ya boy G, and I'm holding it down at the Ranch. I been knocking this out. I come home in nine months and when I do get free, I'm go' get grimy and get on my money hype. And I'm go' get into the booth and start rapping, because I got a little heat. I think I'm up there with Lil' Wayne, but I guess we'll find that out when I touch down.

-G Baby LCRS

From The Beat: We hope you learn to rely on your rapping skills instead of getting grimy to get on your money hype. Why don't you write some fabulous raps for The Beat? Anything you publish in The Beat becomes copy written and no one can rip off your work. So let's see what you can do! Show us your best, your favorite raps! Otherwise keep your Lil' Wayne bravado to yourself!

The Last Time I Felt Good

The last time I felt I really felt good was when I was with my young thugs, riding around in big rentals, smoking big, riding around getting females, chillin', fat chains, man, having big fun.

Fat Thugs famous out here. Everybody love Fat Thug. Holla at ya boy. Love Fat Thug always,

-Fat Thug U7

From The Beat: You know, Fat Thug, having fun is something all of us like doing, but there comes a time when you have to look at your life and decide it's time to grow up and start acting like a young man instead of an old boy. We don't know if believe in the Bible or not, but St. Paul writes in the Bible: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

A Man With No Plan Always Fail

Man, this ya boy, L. I'm at the Ranch right now, trying to knock this time out. To all in the halls, stay up. We gone get back. They can't hold us forever. But the big question is: What we gone do when we get out?

Man, I'm tired of the system. Being in the system ain't coo' at all, because it stop you from doing all sorts of things. Sometimes, when I sit up at night an' think, I wish I would've listened to my family about going to jail, because now I see how hard it is to be away from home with people you don't even like. But what's keeping me going is I got a few homies I'm up here with, that I can talk to about a lot of stuff that's on my mind. I always say to myself, "I can't wait until I get out." But if I was to get out today, I wouldn't have no plan to stay out, because my pops always told me, "A man with no plan always fail." All right, Beat. One love.

-L LCRS

From The Beat: Your father is very wise. It may be hard at first to reorient your life away from whatever you were into, but maybe with lots of time at the Ranch, you can step-by-step think about what out of the streets intrigues you. What are you good at? What do you like to do, that you can develop into work you love? You're asking the right questions. We hope now that you're open to answers maybe you've never thought of before, that you'll figure out where you want to go, what you want to do, when you're free again.

I Am The Streets

I don't think I can say good bye to the streets, because I am the streets. Don't get me wrong, when I get out I got something to live for, so I'm gonna do the best I can for my child.

-Derik

From The Beat: Having a child is a big responsibility, but we're not telling you something you don't know. Or maybe we are? What type of life would you like your child to have? Would you like for your child to follow into your footsteps, as far as getting locked up, etc? We don't believe that your child deserves that, or anything less than your best. However, you can't give your child your best if you value the streets, (or think you are the streets), more than your child. Remember that your child is a gift and that he or she did not ask to be brought into this world!

Felt Good When I Got Out

The last time I felt good was when I got out. I felt good when I walked out of the door, but then I did the same thing and came back in. Now I did five months and might get out in a couple of days, and I'm very happy. When I get out, I'm going to change my life, play football and get my tattoos erased.

-Luis

From The Beat: Hopefully you learned something this time around that you can apply to your life, so you won't have to come back. You'll be going through the same emotions soon and we hope you can better control yourself this time. What you mentioned is a good start to changing your life. Are there some other things that you can also do? Where does school fall into the picture? How about your family? Stay focused when you get out!

New Year's Eve And Day

The last time I felt good was on New Years Eve, New Years Day. I was with my homies all night, feeling myself out my body. I was with some beezies, kickin' it, and got to the house. After, I felt the best feeling for a minute.

The last time I felt good was January 26, 2007, when I got perky with my homie posted up with two beezys all night.

-Dreezy

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing the "last time you felt good." But, are there other things that also make you feel good? Do you play sports or anything? How about possibly spending time and playing with little brother, sister, nieces and/or nephews? We ask because there has to be more ways for you to enjoy yourself--some other constructive things that won't get you into trouble with the law, or your probation.

Never Put Myself In That Situation

I have been in the halls, like, nine times and every time I got out, I couldn't imagine not being able to learn for the rest of my life. I would avoid not being in that situation by not doing stupid things. All my charges are drug related, so I'd stay away from drugs. I think I will never put myself in that situation.

-Derek

From The Beat: Do you think that the gentleman you're speaking of wanted to be in the situation he's in? For your sake, we hope that you don't put yourself in that situation! So, how do you go about staying away from drugs? What are some of the stupid things that you stop doing? What are some new and productive things that you start doing? Do you think you may need some support in order to stay away from drugs? You know there are people and programs out there that can help you do so. Take advantage of those people and/or programs.

Getting Out

I'm 'bout to get out and go to a placement. I'm mad, but it's better than being in here. They gave me twelve months, and I have done a month in here, and I got another month. I just had my b-day. I'm seventeen--it's hard that I wasn't with my family, but whatever.

-Bugzy

From The Beat: You're optimistic and that's a good trait to have. You're almost an adult, by age, and can't afford to be messing around. The consequences and the adult environment are a lot different from what you're seeing and used to. Are you willing to do what's necessary to complete your program? You know there will guidelines and rules to follow. Do what's asked and work towards finishing your education and/or getting some job training. This will reunite you with family and hopefully keep you there for the long run.

Growing Old Behind Bars

Being in prison for forty-six years, that's something I can't even fathom right now. I'm in Marin Juvenile Hall and I hate it, and I have only been here for four days. I can't imagine being locked up for forty-six years, especially in a state prison.

-Alex

From The Beat: For the gentleman that you're speaking of, he probably started off in juvenile hall just like you. He probably never thought that he too could end up in state prison, or for that amount of time. How does hearing this story make you feel? Do you get a little, or a lot more serious, about the opportunities that you have? Do you let this story inspire you to get your life together? If you were to get it together, then that gentleman sharing his story would have been worthwhile. Or do you let it go in and out one ear? The choice is yours.

The Last Time I Felt Good

When I got a job for the first time and going to school, I was very happy for a long time. I felt like nothing could stop me. My father told me I would never get a job or good grades. I achieved that this year.

-No Name

From The Beat: Those are some big accomplishments. What's the lesson that you learned from achieving both of those things? We hope you learned that you can accomplish what you set your mind to doing. Hopefully your father was just saying that as a form of reverse psychology. And if not, you may have made him not be so quick to judge, or speak.

The Last Time I Felt Good

The last time I felt good was today, when the judge said I'm released tomorrow.

-Unknown

From The Beat: That's definitely a good thing! We hope that you're able to take advantage of this opportunity and not continue the cycle of incarceration!

SANTA CRUZ

I Am From. . . .

I am from Watsonville. I can't be there right now, but I will die trying to go back. I love where I come from and will protect it with my life. Everything I have experienced has happened in those streets.

-Luke

From The Beat: You won't have to die to get back to Watsonville, and you don't have to die "protecting" Watsonville. It's true that we humans can become fiercely attached to a 'place'. All animals, human, or not, have a territorial instinct. But it's also good to understand that people come first. What would Watsonville be to you if your family and friends didn't live there? It would be just another place, wouldn't it?

I Am From

I am just an ordinary kid from Santa Cruz.
My life started going the wrong way when I was in pre-school.
I've never grown up and no one knows what to do with me.
My life is made out of respect – from the way I talk
to the way I pray at night.
Everyone is given respect and treated as an equal.
Only they can take it away.
I am Garich. That's who I am.

-Garich

From The Beat: Well, we're glad to meet you, Garich. We're curious about what you mean when you say: I've never grown up. Do you think you should be all grown up by now? How old are you? You say you respect everyone equally. But do you respect yourself? Do you know how to forgive yourself and try again? If you keep practicing at being the kind of person you really want to be – a 'good' person, we're guessing – then you'll eventually get there. Don't give up on yourself.

Happy Anniversary

~~O~~-Vo Beat! This is Jesse writing again. Well, last week was my one-year anniversary. And I am surprised that I haven't gone crazy. But I've found out that I'll be leaving here in a couple of months. And where I'm going ain't any better. But I can't complain. I'm just gonna handle my business. Alrato!

-Jesse

From The Beat: Hey Jesse. As long as we'll be working with you for at least a few more months, how about giving us another series about "a day in the life of". We all loved your series about being tried as an adult. We know that series was just the tip of the iceberg. We'd like to read more.

What's On My Mind

The thing on my mind is Mary Jane, because I have been clean for about a month, and that's hard for me because it's going to be the first time that I've tested clean for almost seven years. At the same time, it feels good, because

I've got my mind working better than it was. Like, I can think better, run, and feel excellent. That's all I can say, for now.

-Michael

From The Beat: That's very good news Michael. We think you'll discover that life is even more interesting, now that you're not dulled out every day. Good work.

My life is made out of respect

JAIME ESTRADA ***Jail is such an experience that can get one thinking about nothing but what goes on in jail. That's what they call being institutionalized. The way to break the vicious cycle of institutionalization is by keeping your mind on the streets. And although this next writer, who we're sure you've heard of if you ever picked up a Beat, is mainly talking about the struggles of being incarcerated, he does so in a way that allows himself to not be too institutionalized. He describes nothing but negative aspects of incarceration. Are there any positive ones besides "rehabilitation?" For we know that's a gigantic lie. But anyhow, he's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. We hope conditions in there don't get too unbearable because just because we committed crimes doesn't mean we aren't human and should be treated as such. Just food for thought and if you're still hungry please read on. This next writer is a brilliant one...***

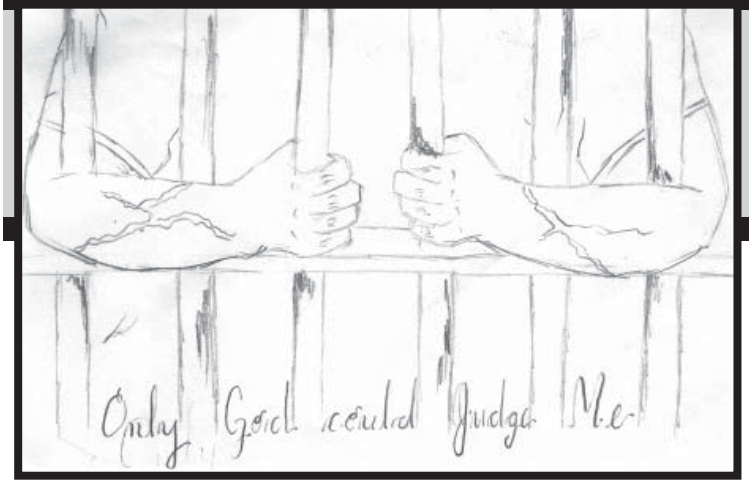
Times are rough times are miserable.

Eyes Wide Open

I been lost and yet to be found
As my world goes round and round
With eyes wide open, I've looked upon my soul,
I wondered if I will ever find the way home.
His life so insane, behind the walls of emptiness that I built,
But I go on feeling no guilt
At times I often wonder what I really feel inside.
Why I have no emotion and I'm not able to cry.
I covered my emotions with schemes of money and greed,
For forgotten love I never received,
But I smile, I laugh, and I heal to only wake up to feel again
So I'll look to another day with eyes wide open.
Without that word yet to be spoken "Love" I see, I hear, as I breathe. Still struggling to achieve.
It's been so hard to see it go bye.
Not allowing myself to cry,
Only the tattooed teardrop on the corner of my eye.
For we don't always love, but we do hate,
We go through this terrible fate.
We in our own way could love so strong
That we get lost in the shadows of all that is wrong.
But we feel so strong that we have love so deeply.
That we don't know if we're awake or sleeping.
Still walking into a daze for it's just a phase,
But roll with me to my level, I was molded into this rebel.
As before the storm comes the rain. The pain.
The price we pay the price of fame. To burn in hell with the hot flame. This is a harsh lesson, got twisted in the life of essence.
The front side of the face card. We ride hard.
When we see what we facing is a knife straight through the heart.
So call it and hang tough.
Fold or raise the bet as you dance to the drum of your own beat.
All you have was left on the streets for we live and die by the gun
Or end up in prison there is no fun. In darkness there is no sun.
Skin slowly pale. Soul getting so frail. Only to burn when we reach hell. But I guess we're already there. Prison, jail cell.
The way it is when you're behind the brick wall.
The life of a killer's ball.
Where you got to hold on to stand tall.
Playing rough is not enough
You prove your intentions from beginning to end.
The controversy that circles me.
But for now. For a split second I am at peace.
Just letting my pen do my verses is what it is I have no excuses.
For with my eyes wide open I can't see.
I hope someone could see for me
I got the shades covering my eyes and I'm still struggling.

The Hourglass

Times of sand of bricks and stone,
His heavy weight just feels so bold
In times that stand so still, feeling the chills
In a cell that is so cold,
Good times that have now been gone
In a moment it feels so wrong.
Now lost in the chaos with the tortured writing on the wall with stain
Of blood, of people whom had enough stains of fears, of tears.
The lonely years,
Ink that will not go away.
In times of sand they won't dissipate,
Only the silent voices remain of those men who prayed
For in the layers of time, the white paint drove them blind.
Confused with the shadows inside their mind.
What a terrible fate, men who was full of hate,
There was no repentance, condemned to eternal life of sentence,
For it all has been done with the crippling hands of time.
Where the tape doesn't rewind.
This is the glass of sand wicked souls in this wicked land.
In deception, the crossroads of this intersection
Of men whose thoughts have deceived their hearts
In a vision that all cannot understand in this times of sand,
Only the wicked souls in this wicked land.
Just looking at the tainted wall with eyes wide open.
Feeling invisible. Times are rough times are miserable.
Nothing said anything spoken,
Staring at the wall of all the hearts that have been broken
But this one man still stands as he looks down at his own hands.
They are firm and strong. There is nothing wrong.
Will power is not yet gone.
But in his mind he holds the reflecting mirror of the time of sand,
Of sorrow,
Here today and gone tomorrow,
But today his thoughts are still profound
With discipline and structure,
His heart is yet to rupture
It only gets heavy as he slowly grows old.
His sight is fading with the cold.
Unleashed in his memory as he still stands tall,
Waiting for the hourglass to empty
For the bricks and stone to crumble
For in times as he only grew stronger
Time has made him stumble
But he walks with his head held high,
This trip is still not over,
Brace yourself for the bumpy ride.
The hourglass is still not empty.



In The Concrete Jungle

In struggle we have stumbled
As we walk through this concrete jungle,
In this rough side we struggle to stay alive.
We ride, we collide, we die,
We see the opening in the sky as we fly high
One cannot be changed?
I guess I am who I am.
Even if in the eyes of the beholder I'm not a complete man,
People do not change?
They only become soft, when they feel tired, they had enough.
It is the truth. I seen it, it is with proof,
People do not change? Prove me wrong!
Show me I been misunderstood. I haven't done it.
Maybe you could.
We rumble in this concrete jungle, always in the line of fire,
Killers for hire in this wire,
Born and raised in this mapped out maze.
Proud of the Indian traces in our face,
Seen it all since young, lost in chaos, power and corruption.
Striving without reaching and success, we only follow the beast,
All the way having a feast.
There is no rest for the wicked.
Prison is our only ticket
We crossed the line into the shadow of darkness
Slowly becoming heartless,
Can we be forgiven for our sins?
Will I see the bright light when I finally sleep?
Will I have my soul to keep?
But till that day comes I will sustain the beat
In my heart for it controls my mind from falling apart.
I will not be driven insane.
Nothing but the bloodstain of darkness inside my brain
For this is the story,
The history of struggle grew up without a father or mother,
Now stuck in this misty hole where you can't even open the door,
But to the game I been so true,
Even if my sky is dark and not blue.

JAIME ESTRADA (CONT.)

To be left to walk the concrete jungle,
For day by day with the rest we rumble.
Still breathing as some have crumble.
We collide, we die, the struggle to stay alive,
Till the strength fades away.
Then I will die, but with a smile I will fly high in the sky.
Lived a life of stains, pain in the wicked strife,
With cutis that runs so deep. That I been walking in my sleep.
My loved ones will never understand the struggle of this man
But they will remember forever my crazy ways.
Some will smile, some will frown. Some may even cry.
They will look up and see me fly high in the sky.
In eternity of peace. How can I turn my back to which I am?
I was molded into his man. I had to watch my back.
Lived a life in the fast track. With the pistol always at the waist.
Seen death face to face, zig-zagged through dark nights,
Struggling putting up a fight forever an uptown soldier,
Aztec Warrior, in prison riding forward,
25 to life in the concrete jungle walking the strife.
All we had is now gone. Now I got to hold on.
Got to stay strong all that was right was wrong,
But this is me now in a new light, but still struggle with my life.
So with my pen I flow all jokes,
In the SHU putting down the verses to die without regrets,
But knowing what will come next.
As I will fly high and leave behind this concrete jungle.
No pain to gain. Images of blood inside the brain, but I stay strong.
I hold on to maintain myself sane.
Maybe I done it all wrong, but till then I still hold on till I am gone.
This is my truth. I lived with no regrets you hold the proof!
With blood I shed no tears. I die I have no fear.
Until I'm taken to the unknown.
Then and only then I'm gone. The end justifies the means?
The concrete jungle has seen me bleed...

MARCOS CASSANI

This next writer blows us away with a great poem this week. He talks about regretting ever coming to jail. He talks about living his days under a gun and spending his time with lifers who he feels deserve something better than a life of incarceration. But what strikes us the most in this poem is the last two lines, "If you're still young and you can change your life, do it, because I know I would my friend." That statement encompasses a great aspect of The Beat Within. So many times we go through life not realizing the grave consequences to our behaviors that by the time we're experiencing those consequences it's too late. Some would say it's never too late while others would argue that there are times where it's too late. Do you want to be taken away from what you love? Are you excited by the thoughts of going to prison? Is it a rite of passage for you? Well, if you answered yes to any of these questions we think you should read this poem over and over again because it may give you a different perspective, or it may not. Whatever the case, this is a well-written poem and he's writing from a California State Prison in San Diego, CA.

You don't know what it is to live 24/7 under a gun,

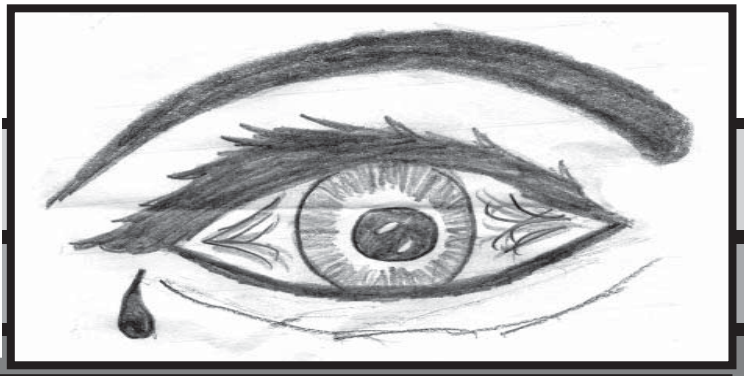
I still have hope because I have a date,

But what about these lifers, they have none.

I Know I Would My Friend

I'm sitting here in my cell, completely alone,
Looking out my window to nothing, oh how I wish I was home.
Sometimes I feel depressed, yeah I feel down and out,
I'm always wondering what my life is all about
I ask God why do I live this life of incarceration
Why am I behind bars, behind barbed wire?
Why can't I be home like a normal person playing Playstation
But even though I'm locked up, and rotting away,
I still find time to smile, during, these lonely days.
You don't know what it is to live 24/7 under a gun,
I still have hope because I have a date,
But what about these lifers, they have none.
But still I sit in my cell, and yes I break down in tears,
Even though I have two months left,
I'm surrounded by dudes with hundreds of years.
I try not to think of that, because it makes me blue,
I used to be that little boy who
Wanted to be a doctor, look at me now, who would have knew.
I've left myself down, my family and the ones who I adore,
But it's actually quite sad, because I'm capable of so much more.
Like writing my poetry, right off the top of my head,
But here you find me rotting away in a cell instead.
But my feelings are being heard through The Beat Within
If you're still young and you can change your life,
Do it, because I know I would my friend

MIKE BURGE ***Talk about dedication... talk about persistence... talk about loyalty. This next writer once wrote for The Beat from another institution, but for health reasons, he was sent to the Hunt Correctional Center in St. Gabriel, Louisiana. He's not allowed to receive a Beat there, but he still wants to contribute. We've tried to just send him the page he was published on but we don't even know if he's allowed that. The only upside to the new place that we know of is that he can now have contact visits, so he was able to hug his brother for the first time in years. But anyhow, his dedication is immeasurable because he can't get The Beat, yet he still shares huge parts of himself by disclosing the experiences he's had in life. In this piece, he speaks about his grandmother passing away. What a sad day that is... Especially when you're her favorite grandchild... That must really hurt deeply inside, but we know that there will be brighter days for him. His grandmother sounds like a real angel and hopefully the things she's taught Mike will stay with him for many more days to come. This one's for you Maw-Maw...***



Maw-Maw, "Our Friend"

She cried always for her long lost grandson
Who might have been,
For the bright, loving
Young man that she knew so many years ago
It is still difficult for her to believe
The compassion and caring that she once knew
Of him was now a thin disguise
There could have been, should have been so much more

She reminisces of the once sweet boy
Her little man who wore a flat top haircut
Who never cussed, says no ma'am and yes ma'am
Who was sincere and thoughtful of others

Her daughter and son-in-law she blamed
For the change which altered her grandson's mind
Into a young boy who developed an anti-social personality
They both were alcoholics and addicted to prescription drugs
Hardly could they go a day without consuming their share

Throughout his childhood he lived with Ma-Maw and Granddad
To become the person that he was so capable of being
They did everything to instill the morality and character needed
To become the man he should have been

Sadly he kept getting diverted whenever his mother returned
To reclaim her son after six months or a year, etc.
He was neglected and ignored when he stayed with them
When he was merely three years old
The scars to his mind and personality began
They did not do anything to provide him with love
Or cultivate any nourishment to his personality

He observed his parents drunk or stoned routinely
He witnessed them fuss and fight often
Occasionally even stab each other
When he was still just a small child
His father often brought him into bars with him
At times his mother beat him for little or nothing

Once she beat him with a curtain rod and her fists
When he was only ten years old
Requiring him to get stitches in his face and leg
A few times he ran away from home
Eventually the worst thing that could have happened did
He was placed in the state reform school for boys
There he got educated in the ways of crime and gangs
He was now living and hanging out with boys
He had never associated with before

He went home to Ma-Maw after a year there
But he wasn't the same little boy Ma-Maw had known
The flat-top hair and corduroy coat were now replaced
With slick back hair and a black leather jacket
Ma-Maw's little man was now hard to control
The happy and gentle boy was now sullen, bitter and angry.
She could not reach him anymore
Obviously she now saw a child desperately unhappy

She loved the child more than anything, even her own children.
He was her favorite grandchild
Of the dozens her six children gave her
It grieved her unmercifully because she
Was unable to protect him from himself
She never gave up on him but deep down
She knew he was lost by the now absence of
The glow that once shined so brightly in his eyes
She finally reached the conclusion that if he was not killed
By others then the emptiness inside him would destroy him

While still in his teens at eighteen he pulled off a
Shocking offense in a shootout with rivals on city streets
In prison at nineteen he killed an inmate in a knife fight
Now he is kept locked away from any traces of freedom
Traces that for him seem crucial to foster life
Into an overwhelming derangement he will keep plunging
Deeper and deeper
That grips him within his small space in a cell where
He will always be kept
He will never again be the person he once was before his imprisonment
The one Ma-Maw always reminisces about

When Ma-Maw reminisces of him it is hard for her to identify
Exactly when his antisocial feelings emerged
But emotional development was noticeable to her in his Early childhood
Ma-Maw can remember once her daughter giving him to her
With a bruise over his eye and a few more on his legs
When he was only three

His inward turning of emotions resulted for a need for love
And acceptance unfilled from humiliation and denial
Once this process begins the small child will grow larger,
But he will never advance emotionally under such care

Ma-Maw corresponded with him for fifteen years until her death
Three gun-carrying guards accompanied him to Ma-Maw's funeral
In an orange jumpsuit and chains he came to bid her farewell
Ma-Maw's children, grandchildren and friends filled the pews
She was dearly missed and loved by them all
As he stepped up to the casket to pay his last respects
His leg chains sounded noisily loud within the church

As he looked down at Ma-Maw laying in her coffin
His heart aches and his mind is tormented over her
He is sorrowfully afflicted with guilt for he knows he failed her
He realizes she died still agonizing over his loss of worth
The few words on her tombstone he thinks of often, the truth of them
"Ma-Maw, Our Friend"

You say you're dropping science
I've never seen science without the math
You spit it faster because you're blessed with the gift of gab

FRED SMITH *Writing from Susanville State Prison in Susanville, CA, we bring you a writer that we're so happy to finally hear from again. And you'll see why when you read his latest poem. He's always been a real powerhouse player for The Beat Without section. He's the type of BWO writer that enjoys speaking to the younger generation because he's compassionate enough to not wish what he's been through on even his worst enemy. So, he usually takes it a few steps further by calling out to the youngsters to let them know he's sincere and that they can continue doing what they're doing if they want a fate such as his. This week he comes back with a vengeance as he writes like he's taking someone under the wing. "Take My Hand," and I'll show you the way. I'll explain how to survive in jail and you can take it or leave it. We like his style of writing and we're sure you will too.*

Peace

I know it's been awhile since I've wrote, I have been goin' through the fire right now in the hole and getting things together. It's so amazing the things that life throws at you. It really lets you see who you are and what you're made of. I was embraced when I first wrote to The Beat and I need your arms now.

Take My Hand: Part One
If adversity builds character
Then I should be the sharpest brother walking this earth
Breaking these chains straight from America
Spit that at ya' flowing this poetry so it grabs at ya'
To open up your mind rewind the time a take a stab at ya'
What good is you on this earth with no worth
Blind to the good, blind to the lies from all the hurt
You say you know that real you don't even know the half
You say you're dropping science
I've never seen science without the math
You spit it faster because you're blessed with the gift of gab
I seen your kind before here one day then gone just like a fad
Just listen and I can tell you how to last
Just pay attention and I can teach how not to crack like glass
When under pressure got to think fast
And not react to the mad
I know it hard from those genes that were left by dad
God's here to guide you so you can find you and get back on the path
Are you willing to bet your soul on how you were living
Sit back and chew on that cause its spiritual
What I'm spitting through this lyrical
Come grab a hold and let me take you to the unknown
I know the journey is long but the reward is great
You don't have to do it alone we can share the weight
Take my hand.

Who Cares

Lord I'm not ready to go
I need a little more time on this earth to watch my seeds grow
And cleanse my soul of these sins
Its heavy load paradise is the ultimate goal
But sometimes I want you to take me away
And shelter me from the rain and the pain
In this life trying to change
All the misery and senseless killing
They play God but they're the villain
Blood they're spilling
Innocent men, women and children
I hear 'um crying in my sleep
Pray for their souls on my knees
My brothers and sisters are dying from Africa to the middle east
They tell us it's freedom and security reason
But if I want right to prevail is that call treason
I want to stop the bleeding and cut the head off the demon
Lies they feed us to impede us brain wash us and teach us
They say they follow Jesus and doctrine that he teaches
It was one big lie tell me why they didn't impeach him
'Cause this is nothing but a crusade that keeps the government paid
While the youth fill up the graves
Parents dream blown away
Strapping their bodies full of bombs innocent people they're hurting
There's no heaven for suicide they lied about 99 virgins
You'll never find that in the Quran or the Hadith
Just another trick form the beast on your soul he feast
Every body a terrorist if they try to resist
Tap my phone and my computer and watch every word I spit
This nation is scared from all the death and despair
Looking for which way is it coming land, sea or air
We better beware but who cares
Lord where in trouble I know life is a struggle
You say, that you want put on us what we can't bear
I know it's your plan sometimes we don't understand
The things you do lord it seems that don't nobody seem to care

DARYL GRANT *This next writer pulls no punches... And although he's pretty straight forward in his writing, calling people on their character flaws, we have to admit he does have a point. There comes a time when every man must accept responsibility for their actions. Now, we're not saying the criminal "justice" system isn't a messed up one to deal with, but we are saying that we have the most influential role over our own lives. Other people are influences but we are the ultimate one. He's writing from Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA, and he makes that very obvious in his piece. Most may not agree with his approach, but he does have a real strong point.*

. . . there's no baby Pelican Bay. It's just one Pelican Bay State Prison

To Whom It May Concern

I'm writing to let the young people know what it's like to be in prison. It's not cool, you be told what to do just like it is in juvie and any other lock up, you just do more time in prison.

I've been locked down thirty-three years, since I was nineteen. Jail and prison is no joke. Don't let people who never been to jail fool you. Think for yourself and try to do the right things.

By the way stop complaining about your little time. The kind of time you all do ain't nothing. Then why are you crying? Stop doing crime then you won't have to cry about your little time: there's no baby Pelican Bay. It's just one Pelican Bay State Prison, any way try to use common sense to make your decisions before you end up in prison with a life sentence.

Ok then, peace and respects

MARK MALLEN

Writing from a probation camp Gasquet, CA, we bring to you a youngster, eighteen to be exact, who hits us with an incredible poem. He's very talented for his young years so it's our pleasure to welcome him in our pages. He writes about himself and what he needs to do in order to change his ways. This is introspection at its finest. Then he concludes by being thankful for another chance. Maybe the other BWO writers taught him a thing or two. But as you'll see, we've learned from him also, so we complete the cycle of the relentless Beat Within publication...

So Thankful

My life is rough, my life is tough
No matter how hard I try I always get stuck
I blame others for the problems I cause
And I'm the only one flapping my jaws
My life is like a rollercoaster
Sometimes I feel like a gun stuck in its holster
Whenever I'm in trouble I expect to be saved
I gotta face my problems one of these days
I create my own chaos because my life is so plain
But in the end it causes so much pain
I never face my problems, I always run.
If I continue this way I'll come undone.
I'm thankful for every breath I take, I know I'm not a mistake.
I have one more opportunity in front of me that I need to take
I need to stop fooling around.
One of these days I could end up buried underground.
I need to be real and not fake.
My whole future is at stake
All that I saw comes from my heart
I'm so thankful that I got a new start.

One thing is certain today and that is that I wish I would have been able to see that the

RAFAEL CABRERA

For those of us who don't take workshops seriously, and don't think people who mean anything are reading our pieces, here's a wake up call. This next writer is an old allie and friend of The Beat Within. He's been reading The Beat since the early days and has contributed pieces throughout the years we've been around. He is a lifer who is fighting to get paroled and reconnect with his family. Until then he continues to touch lives through a special program entitled Straight Life Program (a youth diversion program). This week he hits us with a letter that challenges the younger generation to think differently about the people they're running with. We can't put it better than him when he says, "Remember, you can learn from our mistakes and hear us out or you can be the knucklehead and learn from your own mistakes. The choice is yours, the easy or hard way. One way or another, your fate is in your hands." And to those who don't take yourselves, incarceration, and even The Beat Within publication seriously, we're sure you'll be in a situation that you regret putting yourself into. But until then, at least read this and consider a change. Give yourselves a chance. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA.

Dear Beat Within

I wish you all the best in 2007! You have to make the best decisions for yourselves. Don't allow peer pressure or influence do anything that is going against your better judgment. Believe me, I've been there. I'm on my 25th year in prison. I came in at eighteen years of age. As a teenager I thought my parents didn't understand and that I knew what was best for me. I thought I knew it all! No one could tell me what to do or not to do. If I was told not to, I would do it and sometimes only to see what they would do or just to get them mad.

Looking back I wish I would of paid attention, but I thought I knew it all. We've heard that we can learn by other people's mistakes. When the opportunity is there I hope you do. See, there are two ways to learn:

1). The easy way, through other people, and,

2). The hard way, through your own bad calls and mistakes.

Usually the people who don't listen and want to learn on their own don't have it so good. Many in the joint are here because they didn't listen to good advice and we knew what was better for us. We didn't plan to come to prison. We just didn't want to make the right thing — what was best for us — and so we are found in the school of hard knocks. After many years in prison some of us gain a bit of wisdom and wish we had learned from other's mistakes by listening to them. Sometimes they were our parents, family, friends, or we were able to see something in a movie or series that gave us a chance to see what was going to be the outcome – our demise if we went down that road.

If any one of us is going to go to another state and we are not familiar with the roads, then we will need to use a map and looking at it might not give us the answer. We may need to ask people for further direction. When we are lost we ask for direction. If you haven't asked for help because you know it all and no one can tell you what to do then I would say to listen because I was there once as a teenager and now

I'm here in prison. Though we all come from various walks, I believe many of us come from a place where the homeboys and homegirls mean a lot to us and we feel good around them.

When I was in high school there were groups like cliques of people: all the football players ran together, the wrestlers, the people who studied very much (nerds), drug users, and there were many groups. I ran with a group of homies. We thought we were better than the other groups and I'm sure every group criticized every other group and thought they were better. One thing is certain today and that is that I wish I would have been able to see that the group I was in wasn't going anywhere except to prison, the hospital, or toward a quick death.

In other words, it was and is a dead end to go with the homeboys and homegirls. Everything we did was negative and that was expected. Now I look around and the only people that are not dead or in prison from the clique I ran with are successful — meaning they are free, married, parents and have good jobs and homes. They did this by leaving the clique and doing what was best for them. Some people come in and out of jail. They haven't decided to leave the clique, this lifestyle. This lifestyle is a road of misery and it doesn't only affect you — it affects those who really care and love you and those you may have intentionally transgressed — beat up, robbed, threatened, or other. Those that left the clique are out there on the streets with their kids, ol' man/ol' lady, have a good job and home and we are here in the joint. If we see that this is a dead-end, then why should you think that it is going to be any better for you? Do you think that you're not going to get a life sentence? So did many of us and like I said, no one planned to come to prison.

If you run with the group/clique that is the gang/barrio, the homeboys and homegirls, then this is for you because I was there and no one could ever tell me any better and I know a group of friends who are in the hole all over the prison system who, if honest, like me, would tell you, "Don't follow in our footsteps. Do something better with your lives. Get an education and empower your peers and try to change the course of your clique." These men in prison, if honest, would, as I, prefer to see our brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, and you, out on the streets, being productive members in society rather than in a cage in prison — a cell with another person and no privacy.

Remember, you can learn from our mistakes and hear us out or you can be the knucklehead and learn from your own mistakes. The choice is yours, the easy or hard way. One way or another, your fate is in your hands. No one can force you to do one or the other.

Hey Beat

What's chewing? Me, some pork rinds. Naw, just playing, but peep game though, I'm not the type to blame others for my mistakes in life. I mean I can say oh it's because my mother did drugs, or because my father didn't love me like he did my step sister, none of them made me take those swings at the creepers that tried to arrest me (they did as you can tell) but I can say that they have a lot to do with my anger and some things that I don't like about myself but I don't blame them for me being here.

I know it's hard for others to actually say I landed myself here or to say well my homie snitched on me no! If you were not doing anything wrong then there would not be anything to snitch on y'all feeling. But what I'm trying, no what I am saying is don't punk up and start crying for moma do yo' time, and get back out there and listen to y'all moma so you ain't gotta come back in here. Well I'm a let loose on y'all for now, holla back

LADY KAYOZ

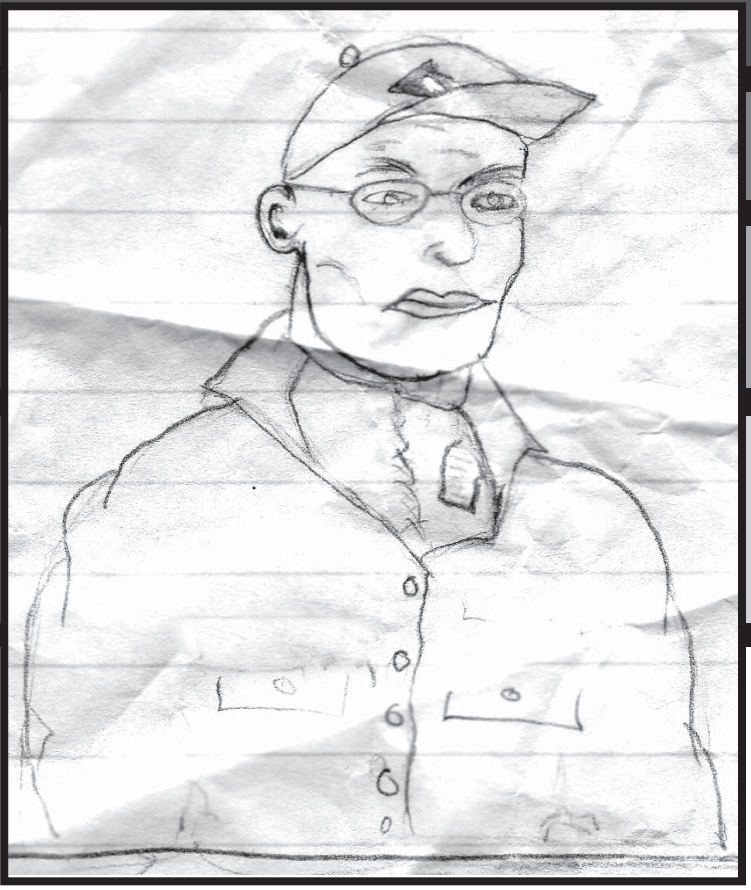
This next writer is truly a treasure because without blaming everyone else for her actions she takes a look at her past in relationship to where she is now and has obviously learned a tremendous amount about herself in that time. When we constantly point the finger at others (which most of us do) we are pointing out problems we can't control and therefore have no real solutions to. The only time we can truly be productive in our growth is by looking at ourselves and seeing the mistakes we made since we can only control ourselves. We can't control what other people do... We thank her for being so mature in her thinking because all too often we get the opposite. Thank you for being a great example to the rest of us who are suffering from run ins with the law... Our role model writes us from the Estrella Jail in Phoenix, Arizona...

The Leaf

Let me tell you a story
Once there was a leaf
That has fallen
From a tree
The leaf has been
Stepped on by oh so many
Feet because the world
Could not see the beauty
Within this leaf
The leaf became rip
And got dirt from
People's shoe's that
Did not care for such
A leaf but one day
Around noon a man
Walking down the street
Stop and stared at the leaf
For he seen something
The world cannot see
He took the leaf home
And cleaned it from it's past
He put the leaf in a case
Made of glass the leaf
Has found a home at last
So now can you see
Look harder because
You'll see that the leaf
Was me...

Moma Always Said

Now you're out on the streets
Looking for a love you can't find
'Cause you feeling all alone
Forgetting that you have a baby at home
But you ain't tryin' to hear that though
You walk in the streets making money at last
When a man walk pass
And put a gun to your head
Saying is there anything you want to say before you be dead.
And in the back of your mind you can hear mom say...
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin' you got your foot on the gas
Can't you see baby I'm trying to make your childhood last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving too fast
But now it looks like you finally hit the grave at last.
Moma always told you
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin' you got your foot on the gas
Can't you see I'm trying to make your life last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving too fast
I'm trying to catch you
Before you hit the grave too fast
You want to grow up so fast
But you barely have a past
Moma trying to hold you to make your childhood last
But all you do is laugh
But in the back of ya' mind
You can hear moma say...
Slow down baby 'cause you're moving too fast
You keep slippin'
You got your foot on the gas
Can't you see I'm trying to make your life last
Slow down baby 'cause you moving so fast
I'm trying to catch you
Before you hit the grave too fast



Karma

Baby girl can't you see where your life is headed
(And I don't mean up)
Look around you locked in a dungeon
(Now you stuck and I bet it sucks)
I bet you there missing moma's loving.
While you crying at night 'cause things on your mind be buggin'.
I bet you be thinking you thuggin'
Well you should have thought about that
Before you thought you were grown
'Cause now you can't go home

FRISKIE ***This next writer needs no introduction but we're going to give her one anyway. One of our most favorite poets and a true survivor of many things, we give you a name that if you don't know, you need to... Friskie. She has a way with words that's incredible for her age and more experiences to talk about than virtually anyone we know. For a minute she was even working in our office, but unfortunately a frustrating turn of events brought her back to the very same place she's learned to dread all these years. We hope she's working on what she needs to in order to get out and stay out this time. She's currently writing from the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility (a Y.A. institution) in Camarillo, CA. Keep coming with these great poems. You know we love hearing from you. We first met Friskie when she was detained in San Mateo County's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall.***

Make It Right

Page after page I write
Down my thoughts
About the feelings I have not forgot
Never have, don't know if I will
I am the only one that can
Fix this because there ain't no magic pill
Mentally ill
Memories give myself the chills
No more thrills
I'm gonna make it
Ain't no more faking it
I'm gonna do this shhh real
Like a boss
At all costs
I need to get better
Be stable through rain and shiny weather
I'm gonna make it right
This time.

The System In My Eyes

Never at peace
Devastation to say the least
When the parole board denies our release
Can't get a hold of family
I wish they would stop rejecting me
A couple letters aren't enough
I need my mothers and brothers loving touch
I don't miss my other freedoms that much
I was institutionalized by age thirteen
It sounds obscene
My first trip to juvenile was age nine
Ever since then incarcerations been going fine
I've been battling addiction for the last six years
Over this period, I've increased the numbers of my fears
A child's mind that's been exposed
And underneath my clothes,
There's a body that's been exploited
A fingers been pointed
I take the blame
I feel the shame
For those who know me
You know my writing
For those who know my pain
Reading this is like a ghost sighting
So I say welcome to the world
Of this sixteen year old girl
My name is Kristen
So open your ears and listen...

Beauty The Beast

Eyes of glass
Girl with ass
In the world get's passed
As having it all
A sultry smile
Makes you want to stay
For a while
Long Talon nails
Full lips — she prevails
Eyes so glossy and clear
You can't even see the tears
Beautiful skin, cellulite free
Lovely things truly indeed
Full perky breasts that steal your attention
Back so sensual, you can't even mention
But her body's tight with tension
Her hearts as cold as ice
Your feelings she will sacrifice
Just to get what she wants
Her tongue teases and taunts
Watch out, she lethal.

Magic

Amazing love
Let go too soon, you're still on my mind.
Making me swoon
You hurt me, I hurt you but we could've worked it through
You left me I wanted to hate you
You set me free, I despise you.
With so much love, my angel from above
We numb the pain caused by each other
With drugs no more kisses or hugs
Pain, too strong for too long and yet I'm staying sane in the rain
I bent over backwards, but I'm not broken
Many friends to turn to DC, Frisco, and Oakland
But every time I hear those love songs it kind of just breaks me down.
To where I frown,
When I'm all alone
Feeling cold growing old.
Sixteen years into this life
You gave me more than heartache and strife
You taught me how to love people right
I miss you holding me at night
You're still on my mind even out of sight
I miss you so much it's tragic
Baby I can't live without the magic...

Life

Live, learn, touch, breathe
Feel, love, pain, bleed
Hate, forgive, burn, read,
Forget, heal, anger, need
Think logical be consistent
Think rationally, be independent
Death, think, strife
Loathe, lust, reach, life
Like, make, shine, fight
Die, tender, living, light
Think assertive, be understanding
Think realistic, be undemanding
Live, learn, touch, breathe
Forget, heal, anger, need
Think, death, hurt, strife,
Die, tender, living life.

FRISKIE (CONT.)

Can't Fight It

I can't fight it no more
My hearts finally hit the floor
I can't fight it I'm done
It's over they won
Livin' a life with too many struggles
Always alone with no one to cuddle
I just want to hide from society
So that no one can ever know me
I'll just live my life like a trophy
And I'll let these bars hide with me
I can't fight it — not again
My spirits been broken just like them
I just lost a good friend
I can't fight it
I can't hide it
this obsession is getting deep
Like the hills in the L's hella steep
I'm a beautiful girl
with an ugly heart
The seed of a rose
That couldn't grow
Because I was kept in the dark
Don't get me started
My hearts been hardened
My life like an abyss
So enter if you wish
I can promise you,
Never again will you ever prosperity or bliss
So I'm gonna end that like this.

Far Away

So far away, and yet so close
Hurting so much just like most
Far away from real life
So close to insanity
From my grief and strife
So far away, hope is out of sight
I'm struggling to shine my little light
I wish I could shine like the stars, so bright
But I'm tired of having to fight
The darkness keeps pulling me down
But I know how to turn a frown upside down
So much practice at putting on a mask to hide my naked face
Where signs of misery you can visually trace
I'm so far away from reality, I feel like I'm in outer space
I sound like a nut case
But I'm hurting deeply
I' d rather live in a dream,
That's why I stay sleepy
I don't want to be on my own
Because I'm scared of being alone
I can't trust myself, so I have to trust someone else with my life
Because my decisions are never right
I'm burning out my own light
So empty I can't survive
I'm so far away from life...

Think And Do

Fruitful thoughts, positive outcome
It's not always fun
Easy is what it's not
But I gotta get this job done
Be nice, think precise live learn
Don't get burned
Become respected,
Nurture the neglected
Be a woman of honor and class,
Not a piece of ass
Smoking out a pipe made of glass
That shhh's all trash
I'm guna shine my light so bright
A beautiful sight I'm gon' be livin' right.

Let Go

I let go of you.
Baby I didn't want to
But that's what I needed to do
To get over the love we shared
It seemed so real like you really cared
Oh boy it's hard for me to say
But ya' best be on your way
Don't look back
Matter of fact
Don't ever remember
The memories I used to treasure
Your name is not to pass my lips
Nor mine yours
That way nobody stumbles, nobody trips
I finally let go, now I'm free to take my pick
I let go of you,
Baby because there's nothing left to hold on to
Just let go and move on.

Locked Up — Not Shut Up

Four walls, two cement, two bricks
Each wall about three inches thick
Supposedly crazier than Hannibal
They keep us caged up in here like animals
Try to breathe the air full of dust
Down the hall – the smell of must
This is the CYA system
Prison – it's full of contradictions
They say it's about rehabilitation
But all the staff are too impatient
Forgetful tendencies lead to staffs inconsistencies.
Doing time in this perverted system
It's hard – you scream but no one wants to listen
Tension building I want to explode
Too much stress – I'm now on overload
Denied parole – once again I lost control
Nobody sees the true person that I am
Lost in this society, where is it that I stand?
My minds capacity is becoming
filled with images of loneliness
I'm trying to seek God and his holiness
I looked in the wrong place
because here I sit and stare the devil in the face
Then I open my eyes
And I'm stepping out of these razor wire gates
Take a new turn, I'll leave the rest up to fate.

Wanted

Fear, loneliness, confusion and pain
Purposely drowning myself in the rain
All I can do is sleep, because my soul is weak,
If I open up my mouth to speak,
I would just make a mess of my words and vowels,
I hear these noises in my head – screaming louder than bells,
I just want to hurry up and die
Sometimes that's easier than having to cry
Well no, I don't want to tackle death,
I just want to feel numb,
I may sound dumb, but I know somewhat bright,
I feel like darkness trying to hide from the candles light
I am the soul the devil seeks,
So give me over, instead of playing hide and seek,
He wants my blood to be spilled,
That beautiful red color give your skin the chills,
Into the casket, here I will lay going down into the dirt,
It's a beautiful day.

HANS JENSON ***We just got several poems from New Lisbon Prison in New Lisbon, Wisconsin. This man touches on everything from politics with pieces like 'Prisons Vs. Schools' and 'The Native American' to more spiritual things in poems like 'We Ask, What's Next?' and 'I Always Wanted To Catch Up.' There's no doubt in our minds that this next writer is versatile in his subject matter and we really enjoy that. It spices up our pages. So read on and let us know if you're feeling him the way we are — tremendously. Thank you for all your writing, we look forward to hearing from you again soon.***

Prisons Vs. Schools

Should we build more prisons
Or should we build more schools
Which is better equipped
And has the proper tools

Shall we educate our people and build schools
Where we can teach
By the golden rule

Or shall we slam shut the prison door
In the face of the crook
Let him rot in hell
And never see a book

You can't build men
In a prison environment
What they do learn in the can
Is from others who, to prison are sent

A smile or a frown, which shall we keep around
Get rid of all prisons
A better way must be found

We Ask, "What Next?"

We have been to the depths of the ocean
Mankind continues to explore
Of a trip to the moon, we are boasting
Always, we are asking for more

Mars is within our grasp
Soon we will send people there
Travel by shuttle at last
Now, we can travel anywhere

Unreachable throughout our past
Heaven is there, somewhere
Yes, yes, at last
We are going there

I Always Wanted To "Catch Up"

When I was a little boy
Brother Lawrence was already eleven
I knew I could never catch up
Until we both get to heaven

Brother Lawrence was ninety-nine to a day
I still stay eleven years, his younger
Will I ever catch up and stay
Lawrence's little brother

I'll be heading to Heaven sometime soon
Lawrence wants for me there
I'll be flying past that moon
Lawrence and I make a great pair

We'll be angels together
I'll still look up to him
And if that devil gets one of us
The other will join his brother.

The Goose Is Flying

The geese fly by
Some low some high
The hawk does say
As they fly away
It's time to say "good bye"

The Field Mouse

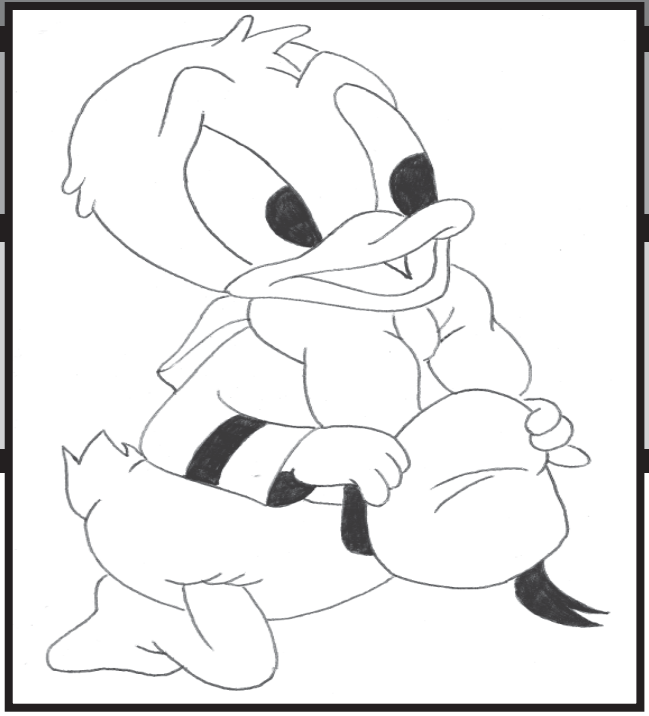
The little mouse
Stays in his house
Deep in the ground
Let the hawk eat grouse

The Native American

This was our land
Now you call it your land
You call us savage
And you steal our land
You destroyed our trees
Brought nature to her knees
Did just as you please
Now our air makes us sneeze

Disaster

The young sea gull
Has a fall
He called for help
As he let out a yelp
He was not hurt at all
Each day I walk
But, I seldom talk
I just go my mile
And then I smile
And watch the flying hawk



In The Rain

EFRAIN TORRES

It can be a beautiful thing when people find God because for some it's a life altering experience. For this writer it was equivalent to finding sunshine 'in the rain.' It's also a beautiful thing when people express the love they have for a power greater than themselves through poetry that fits words together like a puzzle. We usually turn to such a power when we're in a place that's almost unbearable and as a matter of fact, we've heard beliefs that God has made humans weak so we can turn to him time and time again. But whether you use God, or your love for freedom, or anything else for that matter, something needs to happen to break this cycle of incarceration. He's writing from the California Correctional Center in Susanville, CA, and hopefully his faith is strong enough to carry him the rest of the way...

I asked the lord how much he loved me and he said this much! Stretched out his arm and died, just to prove his love.
Now it's him I trust with all my heart
He lifted me up and put my feet upon a rock.
Now I just can't stop lifting up his name,
I ain't ever been the same since he passed my way,
But when it rains it pours and now here comes the thunder.
Sometimes it makes me wonder how I keep from going under.
My brother if you hear me let me know that you're there.
My sisters if you feel me put my name in your prayers
'Cause there's a demon on my tail and I just can't shake it.
If I get hit one more time I don't know if I can make it
But I take it like a man dust off my pants and move forward.
I'm not a quitter I thought I told you I was a soldier.
Gotta hold your salvation with the strength of the lord.
We came too far to give up now so we got to weather the storm.
I'm in the eye of the storm fighting the spirit of doubt.
How come it's raining so hard I'm in this spiritual drought.
I gotta get out before I drown because I just can't get up.
Sometimes it gets so hard I say lord take this cup...
But I know what is up and the life that awaits
A spirit that will forsake me and an enemy that hates me.
Who takes me through this trial is it the devil or the lord.
I know whoever it is this hardship I must endure.
One thing I know for sure is that were in the battlefield.
I seen many get taken out once they let down their shield.
So I gotta keep it real 'cause they my sisters and brothers.
The storm affects us all so we gotta look out for one another
Keep each other in prayer, stand in the gap and intercede
And take refuge in the shelter of the lord's wings.
Above all things keep your eyes on the lord
And don't let go so quick and deny your blessing in the storm.
How come Satan always rains on my sunny days?
I get my fire lit up and he tries to blow it away
I need to stay on the path not the wide but the narrow.
Gotta bind that lying devil and keep my eyes on the sparrow
So many run and hide the first sign of the rain
When all we had to do was pray and ask for one more day.
You may be going through some things can barely hold on
But ya' know when you are weak that's when he makes you strong
You come a long way think about it before you were saved...
'Cause you were slipping into darkness heading straight for the grave. Now look at your life today and all that you have
You see that all these lil' problems really don't seem too bad.
So stand firm like a soldier and let the lord give you grace
And say I fought the good fight and I finished the race.
Don't take the easy way out and let the trials win you over.
Just take a hold of the cross and leave the fighting to Jehovah
Get a hold of the lord, don't let go grab on tight
'Cause he wants to give you peace in your hard times.
You'll see his shine break through the clouds now the storm is gone. This battle has been won because you kept holding on...
There's a blessing in the storm, so keep holding on.
Don't give up now 'cause you got to be strong.
There's a blessing in the storm so keep moving forward.
Stand firm endure like a good soldier
I don't wanna go, I don't wanna go outside no more.

SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

Our good friend and coleague Nick has started a Beat Within workshop at San Francisco State University, which is great because we're bridging the gap between incarceration and education. Here's his introduction, "What's up Beat readers? Well another week has passed and things are getting better. This week The Beat is coming to you once again from San Francisco State University with more writings! As our name continues to grow on campus let me do what I promised the contributors of our new workshop I would do and let you enjoy their writings. Enjoy!"

Why Should You Go Vegetarian?

Now a days many Americans aren't vegetarians. Less than 1% of Americans are true vegetarians. What is a vegetarian? One may ask, well a vegetarian is a person who doesn't eat meat, poultry, fish or dairy products. There are four classifications of vegetarians.

Semi-vegetarian-people who don't eat meat but do eat dairy products.

Lacto-vegetarian-people who don't eat meat but do eat dairy products.

Lacto-ovo-vegetarian- they don't eat meat but do eat egg and dairy products.

Vegans is seen as the hardcore vegetarians. They exclude all meat, poultry, dairy and egg products. Being a vegetarian actually comes with many health benefits, such as vegetarians are less likely to suffer from heart disease, obesity, high blood pressure and even cancer. Studies have shown that vegetarians are more likely to have a higher immune system. Not only dose being vegetarians prevent such illness it also adds on an average of 10 years to your life.

More than 27 billion animals are killed for our meat consumption. So why not save some animals and live a little longer. Pick the tofu burger over the cheeseburger you just may live 10 years longer.

-Aria A

What Is The "Hyphy Movement"?

Hyphy is not just the rhythm or The Beat to a song. Nor is it contents of the song. Hyphy is a feeling of freedom to some extent. The ability to go dumb and not care about anything for those few minutes.

Hyphy provides great beats and rhythms allowing one self to just let loose and just dance. For some hyphy is a lifestyle of constantly letting loose and being free. By doing so people can be happy and just go dumb. What many people associate with hyphy is dangerous and "ghetto" people. This assumption is wrong they need to look at the world positively, not negative.

Hyphy is a culture that will be around for a long time. The beat and rhythm of each song lets people release frustration and happiness. Hyphy is not just being able to go dumb. If I leave you with anything is just to try to let loose. Peace.

-Rosalinda Pulido

JUCE ***This next writer is a great one and you can see why when reading through his three poems and concluding essay that's just off the charts. He's writing from a detention facility in Santa Rosa, CA, but just because he's incarcerated doesn't mean he doesn't have anything to offer. He's been in the law library as he explained to us a few issues ago. And he's also on the verge of being relocated. But the feelings he shares with us about issues we deal with all the time are brilliant. He talks about everything from his two baby's mothers who he has to deal with while being in jail to giving the younger generation something to think about as many of you Beat Without writers do. He explains his survival tactics and what he's survived through. We can't begin to fully capture the brilliance of this man, so we'll shut up and let him do it for you...***

Tryin' To Get Lost On The Page

I'm writin', tryin' to get lost on the page.
Being in here feel like a slow walk to my grave
My soul is on fire, with this sadness and rage
But I'm post to maintain and be coo, locked in a cage
I want to go dumb and act a foo, but I'm only out 3½ hours in 7 days
That's 23 ½ hours locked down, you've put away
Staring at these walls, asking how much mo' can I take?
I'm writing, tryin' to get lost on the page
Got to fight for my fifteen minute phone call I get a day
Ain't shhh for free, so yeah, you go to pay
And if your funds is low, no phone for you today
Try to talk to the C-O, he don't want to hear what you go to say
You smell like b-o might have to shower next to somebody gay
You can refuse, but then you'll catch something from being dirty
This place got ticks, bugs and roaches and ain't got no spray
And through all the B.S. you still got to focus on your case
Or you'll stay in here, eating slop off trays
Waiting to come out your room for only thirty-minutes a day
My son due in June, I'm a miss his birthday
I'll be sitting in this tomb, tryin' to get lost on this page.

Is that what it takes, to get it in your head
I got to end my life, O.D. on some meds
Just to let you know, this love goes past the bed

In A Box

Do you know what is like to sit in a box?
Twenty-three hours a day, with nothing but thoughts
Why my life effed up and where the hells my pops?
Momma did the best she could but where the hells my pops?
Holdin up the walls on these corner man pushin' that rock
Dogs run up on y'a man, better move or you'll get got
Hogs and thieves run these corners man and it ain't gon' stop
Its hard to breathe on those corners man
From block to block
Death and disease on these corners man
Even you can get shot
Break ya' knees bending these corners man
It's just that hot
Thought I'll never leave those corners mann,
It was the spot
I thought I need those corners man
But they need me a lot
Where would I be without these corners man
Not goin' to west block!
(aka San Quentin)

Apologies To My Baby Momma

I apologize for all the hurtful thangs I've said
I mean that with all my heart, so get it out ya' head
I love you, so don't get shhh twisted like dread
No matter what I tell the next chick, remember what I said
Cause my heart is broken and I know yours have bled
And no matter what you say, you'll love me till I'm dead
Is that what it takes, to get it in your head
I got to end my life, O-D on some meds
Just to let you know, this love goes past the bed
You carrying my baby, how many tears must I shed?
If you wasn't so crazy, it would be to you I pled
That's why I'm so shady, but it's no excuse
I know the importance of a baby. Question. Do you?
If the answer is yes, then you better change up soon
It's eff me now, but you'll be hurting in June
Not when he come out but in the courtroom
But that shhh is foul, a life I wish I never knew
It's effed me still, why you want to hurt the baby, me and you
It's effed up, what you goin' put our baby through
Cause I'm locked up, this is how you do?
Got me caught up, trying be there for you
Just remember, he'll always be my baby too.
He'll remember all the ninjas you run through
He'll remember everything you don't want him to
Baby can you just forgive me 'cause I already forgave you!

Reminiscing

Do you want to live my life, with so much pain and strife?
This is what you going to go through, fall and nobody there to catch or hold you
Looked at as a foo' because the system dictate what I do
So I dedicate my life to the streets, get high every week!
Knowing no defeat, knock these suckers off they feet
'Cause the victory taste so sweet
To a youngster who ain't never had nothing to eat
On the grind to get mine and make ends meet!
For a little chump change, this shhh a never change
Same shhh different toilet, but its all the same
And if it does bring shame, it's just a part of playing a cold game
And yes I had dreams, but most of my role models was "Nothin'" but drug fiends
Watchin' them puff puff pass, they lookin' for a high
That will never last
When I was young I was homeless, the streets taught me math
Go to school and my peers would laugh so I had to whoop his a...
Retaliate right there in class, life comes and goes
So I knew this would pass.

This place got ticks,
bugs and roaches and ain't got no spray
And through all the B.S. you still got to focus on your case
Or you'll stay in here, eating slop off trays
Waiting to come out your room for only thirty-minutes a day

Step Ya Game Up Or The Game A Step On You

Well, what it is my young beat readers and writers? It's ya boy Jett aka J-Juice aka. Juce, back up on this paper tryin' to drop off the little knowledge I do have. Hoping somebody catch it and go home wit it ya dig? Remember what I said (if you got the last Beat issue) about having street smarts, with book knowledge and a mouthpiece, how you would be unstoppable. (From me not my district attorney) spending hella time in the law library, while in custody at this facility (jail) I found out how they (the D-A.) was tryin' to manipulate yo' boy on some minor technicalities that would lead to some major time (eight to nine) years.

For one, they cannot convict of different charges for the something. Example: in my case I was being charged with burglary (which is a strike) receiving stolen property, grand theft and a number of a half a dozen other charges. But my point is because basically they are all the same charges (because it was all the same property that was took) they can only charge me with one. My top-notch public pretender failed to mention that, lol, imagine that. So I was going to lot them (D.A.) go against the law, they "both" post to uphold. Then she (my attorney) says she on my side, when she friends with the D.A. on the outs. She must not know about me!

Words of advice. Because the law area is so big the best thing to learn is the Constitution of the United States. Because no matter where you at or what you do (in the U.S.) there is no law (city or state) that has more say so than the Constitution. Its nickname is "The Law Of The Land" cause it powers everything, Yadadimean? And because there was so many stipulation with my case the D.A. said eff it. Because what they try to do is give you hella charges and say you look at this amount of time and try to make you cut a deal, that will have you away from society the longest. Due to people's lack of knowledge they (the system) is able to manipulate most the time. In every case there is a glitch and in every glitch there is a motion (a legal document) you can file for dismissal (to drop charges). It kills me, how I see ninjas that are on the MOD's (one of the jail units) and be looking at 80 years to life and don't go to the law library or pick up a book. I'm not saying that it's going to be easy or stuff is just going to jump out at you. But it's your life and who would fight harder for your life than you.

So the D.A. dropped all the charges except receiving stolen property and I get sentenced on 3/13/07 and I took a 3 to 4 year with half hopefully. So if you believe in God pray for me and if you don't (believe in God) you should give him a chance because what do you have to lose? For real think about it. Man, I got some bad news the other day. One of my baby mommas had a miscarriage and she hates me. She blames me for it, before I got locked up. We got into a big fight over the baby before it even got here. To make matters worse, her mom was feeding her bad thoughts about me because she didn't like the fact that I was black. (Her parents are Mexican) but it is what it is and I still got my other B.M. but we having problems too. But I do have a lady and through all the B.S. she holding it down for real. I would of had hella shhh fall apart out there, if she wasn't out there handling business. She came and saw ya' boy the other day and told me a story that brought a tear to my eye and I don't cry for nothing (not saying its not good to cry once in a while) but anyways before I got locked up I was chilling with her (my girl) and her female cousin and her kids.

JUCE (CONT.)

I love kids and when I'm around them I like messing with them and playing around. She has two little girls and they both got shot in the head at 3 years old barely holding on to their life. One past away on 3/8/07 and the other girl is still in critical condition. When I asked how it happened I was fa' sho she was going to be like a drive by. But no, these little innocent girls where the target. The gunman deliberately walked up and shot little freaking babies. Because they couldn't get their uncle who's in jail.

To me them ninjas is suckas, If you got beef wit me or my crew get at us or at least somebody that can fight back. It hurt so much to know that a 3 year old is struggling and fighting for her life and has a bullet hole in her head. But what hurts more is I can't be there because of choices I made earlier in life. But I knew its in God hands and everything happens for a reason, cause if I was out, only God knows what I'll be ready and preparing to do. I can only pray that God and da pig got to them first. Cause this tragedy had a lot of people pissed off. Normally I play cool with everyone and if we got problem you do and I'm gonna do me and lets keep it moving ya dig? Yeah I get into a little scuffle here and there but it's usually the last resort. I pretty much go with my words so it's been eff beef and get money ya dig.

But damn how can I tell somebody not to retaliate when they burying their 3-year-old man, do to respect being such a big factor in our inner city community. Its crazy the extent some people go to, to try and obtain it. But in the end they end up doing the opposite. Live by the gun and your folks (innocent people related to you) can die by the gun. It all depends on what type of life you lead and sometimes it's not about you at all. But it's whom you are around and how they got down. Yadadieman? Cause I rather live for something' (my son and my family) then be dying for nothing. CAUSE AINT NO COME BACK, AFTER DEATH!

R.I.P to all the fallen souljas and especially the ones that die way too young

DORTELL WILLIAMS

Writing is so important in an era where people gossip, think they know everything about you, and paint pictures of who you are through things like criminal records. It's of importance because it allows you to document your own history. It also allows people to get intimate with who you are without getting too close, if that makes sense. People can feel you without feeling you when you write. We wish certain people in our workshops felt the same way Dortell does because that would show that they actually care about their own well-being. A lot of times we get frustrated because there are those who don't take themselves, their situations, and The Beat Within workshops seriously. Unfortunately, they're the ones that'll have to pay the price later on in life. But Dortell, really gets the importance of writing and we appreciate his words. He's writing from a California State Prison in Lancaster, CA, and hopefully we'll hear from him soon.

Our Eternal Urban Shakespeare

One of the things I like most about writing is its potential longevity. Once our thoughts are penned they can be as permanent as the ink they're written with.

The playwright, actor, poet, and English writer William Shakespeare (1564-1616) is undeniable proof of that. His centuries old writings still teach, inspire and entertain us to this day.

Likewise, with the posthumous release of Tupac Shakur's eleventh album since his tragic death ten years ago, it seams Tupac's materials have ascended him to forever be the urban Shakespeare of our day.

Four of his after death albums have hit No.1 on the pop and R&B/hip hop charts, Tupac holds the Guinness Book of World Records title as the most successful rapper of all time; and his writing have spawned not only the "2Pac Community" which promotes and rewards creative writing, but also a lucrative clothing line called "Makaveli Branded".

Tupac's newest release "Pac's Life" will, no doubt, further polish the actor-rapper's phenomenal legacy. Reading, taking in vocabulary, and pushing a pen did all of that for Tupac. I wonder what such discipline can do for the rest of us?

This place got ticks, bugs and roaches and ain't got no spray
And through all the B.S. you still got to focus on your case
Or you'll stay in here, eating slop off trays
Waiting to come out your room for only thirty-minutes a day
My son due in June, I'm a miss his birthday
I'll be sitting in this tomb, tryin' to get lost on this page.

read the rest of Juce's BWO piece on page 42